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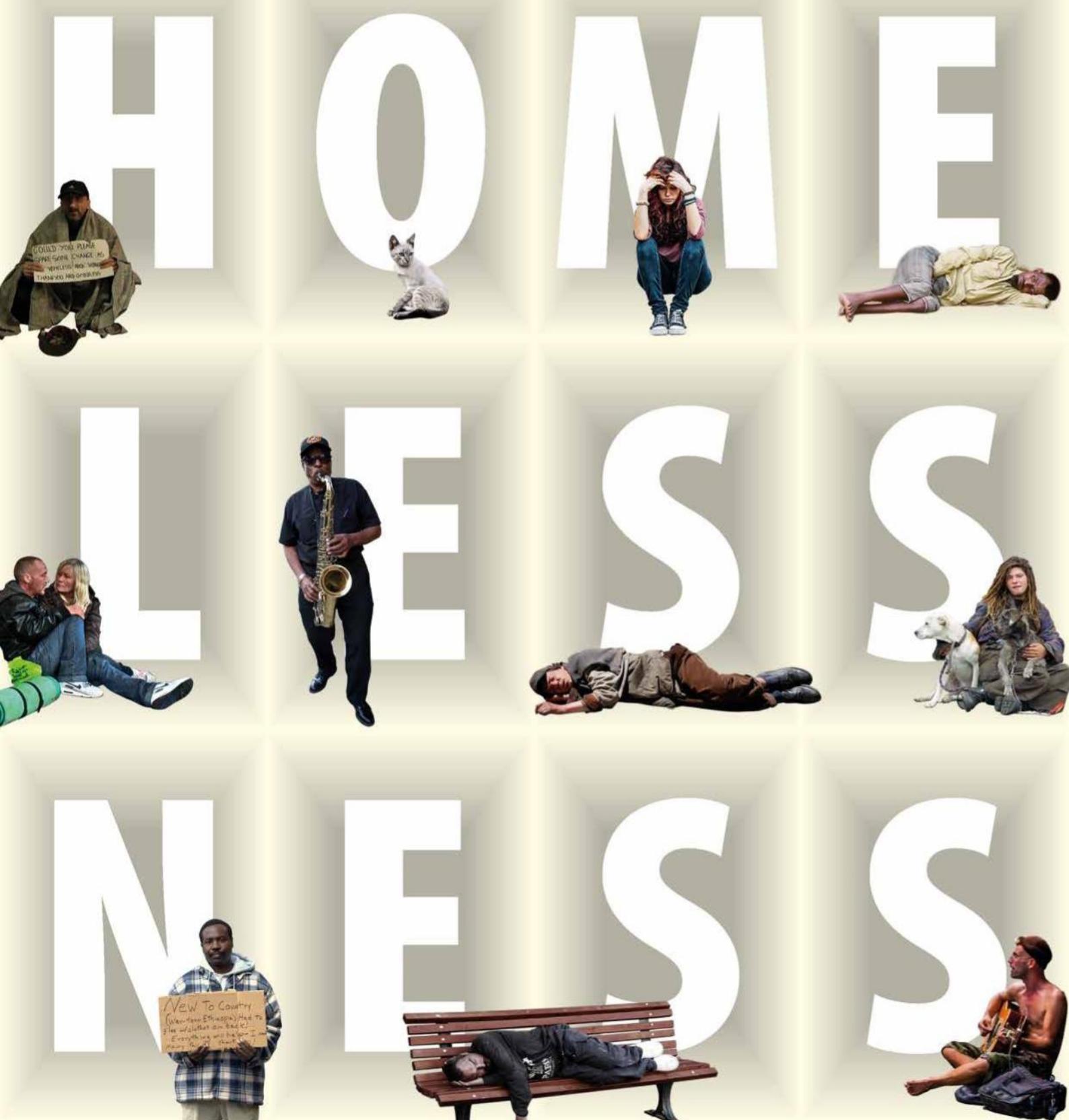
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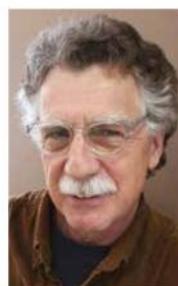
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The meaning of home



I still remember buying our first (and only) house decades ago; pinching ourselves that we'd made such an impossible leap into the financial void.

It was a late autumn afternoon when I slid the key in the lock and tentatively opened the front door for the first time. The rooms were empty and echoing; shadows of past lives seemed to hang in the air.

Then, gradually, that house became our home. We patched and painted the walls and filled the rooms with cast-off furniture. The closets and cupboards were crammed with stuff. And a mountain of memories piled up: babies, birthdays, dinner parties, Christmas mornings, first bicycle rides, play forts in the basement – life.

For me, that's the core meaning of 'home' – it's bricks-and-mortar, yes. But it's more than that. It is also shelter wrapped in memory. That sense of security and of belonging is lost when people are homeless. But how do we calculate our loss when we are unable or unwilling to meet the challenge of housing those who have fallen between the cracks?

In the words of the old Phil Ochs' song: 'There but for fortune go you or I'.

The idea of home also comes under attack when the physical environment is threatened – as in our feature on the depredations of the sand-miners in Cambodia. And from Nigeria we report on the enormous effort to make the country polio-free. ■

WAYNE ELLWOOD
for the New Internationalist Co-operative
newint.org

This month's contributors include:



Laura Jiménez Varo is a Spanish reporter. She specializes in conflict, humanitarian crises and war reporting and has been working mainly from the Middle East and North Africa in recent years.



Rod Harbinson is an investigative journalist, photographer and filmmaker, with particular experience of the Southeast Asian region where he reports on the struggles of indigenous and local people to defend their natural resources from destructive development projects. RodHarbinson.com



Nithin Coca is a freelance journalist based in Berkeley, California. He focuses on environment, social and development issues in the Global South and has specific expertise in Southeast Asia.



Sian Griffiths is a former London-based BBC producer and reporter. She lives in Ottawa where she is a writer and radio journalist specializing in social, humanitarian and indigenous issues.

New ways of seeing

Alongside our magazine, this month we publish **Where Will I Live?** a stunning photo-based picture book for younger readers which looks at homelessness through the eyes of refugee children. For them, life is hard and full of questions. Yet, in spite of everything, they find time to laugh, play, and make friends. And most importantly, they hope that somewhere, someone will welcome them to a new home. nin.tl/WhereWillILive

And on the subject of visual books dealing with tough subjects in innovative and sensitive ways, we are delighted to announce that **Myriad Editions are joining us**. Myriad publish graphic fiction and non-fiction, as well as novels and thematic atlases.

Their graphic books have illustrated the roots of the financial crisis and debunked science myths among other subjects. We look forward to an exciting partnership; all Myriad books will be on sale in our Ethical Shop (ethicalshop.org) later this year.



HELEN WALLIS
for New Internationalist Co-operative helen.wallis@newint.org

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Coming Soon:
Equality • Education

Magazine designed by Ian Nixon and Juha Sorsa.
All monetary values are expressed in US dollars unless otherwise noted.

Letters

Praise, blame and all points in between? Give us your feedback.

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They might be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org or to your local NI office. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.

A valuable resource

First I must congratulate you on the stunning success of your leap of faith [our community share offer - Ed].

I had a huge disappointment about a year ago – trying to chase down some info/support for West Papua.

Always the reaction was the same – glazing of the eyes, and ‘Where’s that?’ Even the city library had nothing. I kind of ran out of steam, but sparked up again on finding, by accident, your April 2002 edition (NI 344). Totally blown away – quality (and bravery of journalism) and depth of report. As far as I can tell it made not a ripple on the sea of apathy.

Fifteen years on, I thought – ‘Maybe they can be persuaded to give it another shot.’ After all, the situation is really dire, and a lot of destruction can happen in that time. The Indonesian government has been so effective at covering it up, muzzling/thwarting the Papuans, and conning the world ‘community’. Imagine then my amazement upon seeing ‘next edition West Papua’.

I am so thrilled to be a part of it (now I’m an investor!). This really brings home what it’s about. Quality reports on things that matter... that the world neglects. As one of your investors said ‘NI is a national treasure’. If we can bail out banks and all sorts of shady businesses, surely we can protect such valuable resources.

Ralph Price Houghton, England

Informing opinion

Re: your take on the current assault on factual information



and informed opinion and the substitution of double-talk for literal definition (*Populism rises again*, NI 501).

I subscribe to the definitions employed by the late Neil Postman, journalism professor at New York University, to describe and explain the pathway to informed opinion. The pathway starts with information, then the distillation; the determination of which elements of information are fact or truth and which are false – the finding of fact, the application of knowledge; an understanding of the factual information, wisdom and experience – the application of context: ethics, values, trust; a reliance on demonstrably trustworthy input and only then, an informed opinion. An uninformed opinion is a prejudice – a pre-judged position, or ‘Don’t confuse me with facts, my mind is made up’.

David Owen Canmore, Canada

Surviving scrutiny

Dinyar Godrej talks about populism (NI 501) and how it is detrimental to democracy or doesn’t talk about the real will of people. In the cuisine called Democracy, populism is just one ingredient, though a major one. But other ingredients like the judiciary, press, public institutions and people’s desire to protect fairness are equally important. He quotes an article on Narendra Modi, but it remains a fact that this gentleman has passed through all the judicial scrutiny and survived a very negative press.

Bhaskar Bhusari Peterborough, Canada

Deflating objections

How refreshing to read about Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees Programme (‘A personal welcome’, NI 501). Offering people the opportunity to help their fellow human beings directly is a very good thing. After all, it isn’t as if the world has so much compassion it can afford to waste it.

One result of the programme that the article doesn’t mention is that it undermines two of the xenophobes’ common objections to refugees: that the government is both foisting them on us and wasting our tax dollars. It’s pretty hard to justify these arguments when the people sponsoring refugees, and paying most of the bills, are your next-door neighbours.

Bill Longstaff Calgary, Canada

Varying support

I wish that the Canadians were as supportive of their First Nations People, whose land they stole long ago, as they are of the refugees in your article (NI 501).

First Nations people are being ignored on the land they were ‘kindly’ given, which is being polluted and poisoned by the exploitation of tar sands by the fossil fuel industry.

Peter Foreman Chelmsford, England

Canadian bases

The coming war on China special edition (NI 498) and John Pilger’s film of the same title are brilliant, important and disturbing. To see how the US has ringed China with

its military is truly frightening and a reminder that the US is still the only nation which has used atomic weapons.

The current mainstream media and politicians are creating a word storm about North Korea having a nuclear bomb and delivery system. Never mentioned is the information provided by Pilger’s reportage and the fact that the US has 7,000 nuclear weapons, bring upgraded and increased right now; and that Russia has almost as many nuclear bombs as the US. The UK, France, China, Israel, India and Pakistan have barely 1,000 between them. Yet 100 bombs exploded around the world could wipe out humanity.

Jeremy Corbyn is both right and a rare voice of sanity when he said his priority would be to work for nuclear disarmament.

Under NORAD and other agreements the US can and does use any Canadian forces base whenever it wishes to. Near my home nuclear powered and armed US warships come regularly past Victoria to Nanoose Bay to use a Canadian base to test maritime weapons systems. The cruise missile was tested in Cold Lake, Alberta and US forces fly over Canada and sail in our waters at will. Canada also is one of the three main uranium producers and exporters in the world, along with Australia and Kazakhstan.

Thanks for all your excellent work in producing my favourite magazine for 40 years.

Theresa Wolfwood Victoria, BC, Canada

Have YOUR say!

Do you have ideas for topics that you’d like to read about in the **New Internationalist** over the next year? Then let us know. Email a short (max 200 words) outline to letters@newint.org by 15 June and we’ll look at all the suggestions at our editorial meeting in July.

When the lake ran dry

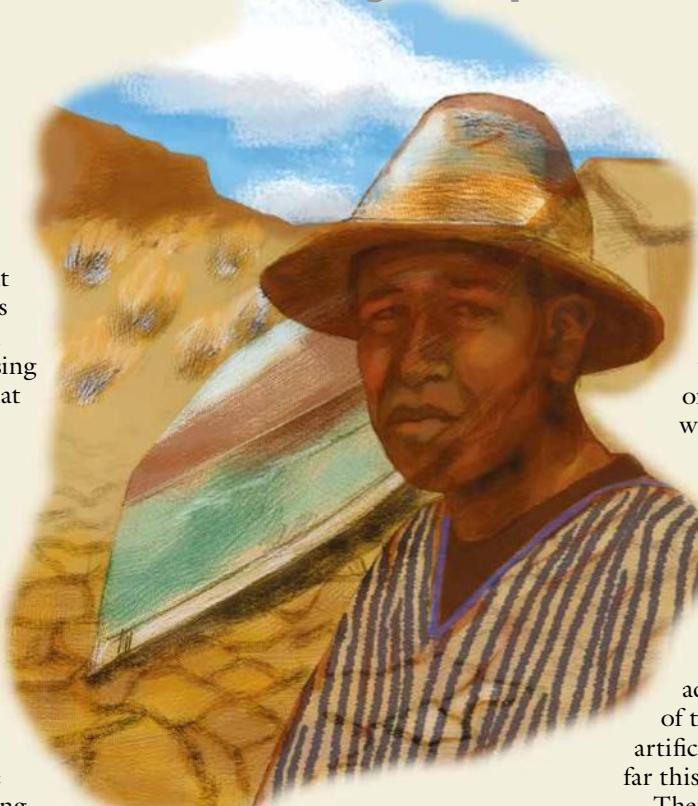
AMY BOOTH visits an isolated indigenous community fallen on hard times, striving to keep their culture alive.

'My ancestors used to live in boats like this,' the old man tells me mournfully. He is showing me a miniature boat, similar in shape to a Viking galley but made entirely of reeds. This is an example of traditional Uru handicrafts, created using reeds that grew in a lake that is no longer there.

We're in the tiny Uru community of Puñaka, which is just a cluster of adobe houses with a few modern homes among them put there by a state aid project. The man can remember when Puñaka was on the shores of a vast lake teeming with life, the second largest in Bolivia. Dotted around the village are small metal fishing boats – but there is no water as far as the eye can see, and the boats are rusting away. This area was formerly the shores of Lake Poopó, in the department of Oruro. The lake itself has almost entirely dried up as a result of drought and climate change.

Abdon, my contact in Puñaka, is an affable young man in a tracksuit when we meet in the nearby town of Poopó. He apologizes for not wearing his poncho. When we arrive in Puñaka, he disappears behind the low wall surrounding his family's home and emerges in a traditional black and white poncho and reed hat. The transformation seems to encapsulate the relationship between urban and traditional lifestyles in Bolivia, where a multitude of rich indigenous cultures exist side by side with cosmopolitan city living.

This coexistence is drawn into sharp relief in Puñaka. The community has been hit particularly hard by Bolivia's drought and the lake drying out because the Uru people



traditionally live in harmony with the lake: fishing, hunting water birds, and making items from reeds. It is not in their culture to raise livestock or work in construction, but with the lake gone, many Urus have had to seek whatever work they can find. 'We don't have anywhere to harvest, to sow; we have nothing. That's why people leave,' Abdon says.

Bernardo, one of the community leaders, tells me that of 20 families in Puñaka, only seven are living there permanently. Many Bolivians in such isolated places swing between their home community and a base in a larger town depending on work, family and other demands. I wonder how it would feel to live between such contrasting environments: while there are remote communities in Bolivia many hours' hike from the nearest road, built-up city areas have sky-scrappers and fast-food chains, like urban centres all over the world.

Here in Puñaka, it is difficult to imagine a cash economy: there is no

public transport covering the half-hour drive from the main road, and the way is not paved. At one point, we pass a tilled patch of land where someone has planted potatoes, but they barely grew beyond sprouts before withering – whether a result of the drought, contaminated water from mining, or poor soil conditions in this harsh region, it's hard to say.

Abdon is keen to preserve Uru culture by attracting tourists to Puñaka. Santiago, the mayor, would like to see a brick or ceramics factory set up with state support, taking advantage of the high-quality silt of the lake bed. He also suggests artificial lakes for fish farming, but so far this is little more than an idea.

There is an otherworldly beauty to this part of the Bolivian *altiplano*, possibly because the already bleak landscape has been blemished by pollution and other environmental impacts from the nearby mining industry; little pools of discoloured water and churned-up heaps of dirt are dotted across the landscape as one approaches Oruro. It is flat as far as the eye can see. Flamingos hop from pool to pool, looking for food.

It is easy to understand why the people I meet in Puñaka are concerned about losing their way of life. The process of keeping indigenous cultures intact alongside city living will be complex as Bolivia develops and changes, in Puñaka and beyond. But Abdon exudes passion for his culture that gives me hope. He says he saw a parihuanu bird fly into the mountains and disappear, which is a sign that the water will return to the lake. I hope he is right. ■

Amy Booth is a freelance journalist and circus instructor living in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

COLOMBIA

Townspeople put stoppers on mammoth goldmine

The people of Cajamarca, a small mountain town in central Colombia that sits atop a rich seam of gold, have won an important battle against mining giant AngloGold Ashanti.

A landslide 98 per cent of townspeople voted for work to cease on the La Colosa mine project, along with all other mining projects in the Tolima region in a *consulta popular*, or referendum, last March.

To date, AngloGold Ashanti, the second biggest mining company in the world, has invested \$900 million in Cajamarca to explore the potential of creating Latin America's biggest goldmine. Its potential impacts include the destruction of local ecosystems and displacement of communities.

'This victory shows the world that the people can win. Those in power will have to listen,' says Maria Camila, a member of Cajamarca-based youth-led activist group Cosajuca.

This was not an easy win, and may yet be appealed by the mining company. Nevertheless, it demonstrated the power of both strategic grassroots organizing and the use of legal channels to challenge corporations operating in Colombia. *Consultas populares* have also been called in other towns including Ibagué, Monterrey, Pueblorrico and Pijao.

The vote in Cajamarca comes hot on the heels of the historic 2016 Colombian peace agreement, which ended



Cajamarca celebrates a landslide victory after a popular vote against La Colosa mine.

Felipe Cotes

a 52-year war between the state and guerrilla army the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Sadly, peace has so far failed to stop violence against human-rights defenders in rural areas. In 2017, an activist has been killed every second day, according to advocacy group ABColombia.

Cajamarca is no exception. Camila reports that members of her group Cosajuca have received death threats as a result of their political activism, and a local leader was killed in March.

Even more worrying, this comes at a time when the Colombian Ministry of Mines and Energy is undermining the referendum by claiming the result cannot be applied retrospectively to existing projects. This serves to legitimize threats and endangers the lives of activists.

Women like Camila will need support and solidarity from the international community to consolidate this triumph and go on to inspire others in the Global South to organize to protect their territories. ■

Tatiana Garavito

US

Migrants show their power

The rules of the game changed in the United States last month on 1 May when people experienced a taste of what life was like on 'a Day without Immigrants'.

The broad, grassroots effort aimed to demonstrate that America was built and is powered by migrant workers – and cannot survive without them. Rallies, strikes and protests erupted in 50 cities, across 25 states. The Day saw immigration-enforcement offices shut down and students shun school; organizers estimate that as many as 400,000 workers walked out.

'We can't live like this anymore,' explains Brenda Valladares from migrant-led network Cosecha, which led the call for industrial action. 'We are hiding and living in fear to escape deportation, we have no freedom, we

can never go home to bury our dead, never be really "seen".'

Some migrants paid a heavy price for their activism. US media reports over 100 workers were fired. But this story is not over yet. With workers in Michigan already mounting a legal challenge and a strike fund firmly in place, organizers say they are not defeated – they're just getting started.

And, for once, migrant workers found they were not alone. The Day won support from an unprecedented array of trade unions, from dockers and postal workers to telecommunications unions.

Cosecha voted to escalate strike action at their annual general assembly last February. Organizers report that the commitment to the strike was highest in Trump heartlands – where hostility, repression and risk are greatest.

Cosecha say that the time for lobbying is over. This national,

decentralized network is fighting for full and permanent rights and protections for America's 11 million undocumented people.

'We've had enough broken promises,' says Valladares. 'We're ready to fight.' ■

**Marienna Pope-Weidemann,
Right to Remain**



10 years ago...

...New Internationalist readers were confronted by one of the magazine's strongest and most effective front covers. The eyes of the woman in Ton Koene's magnificent close-up photograph were mesmerizing – her ferociously intense gaze holding ours, with above it the simple words **DARFUR Don't look away**. So many things are conveyed



ON THE WEB
newint.org

Is Brussels training human traffickers in Libya?

Can Brazilians resist the coup?



CHINA

Feminist folk

An all-woman band is using music to challenge China's rum treatment of women migrant workers.

The folk quartet, Jiu Ye, perform songs that explore the myriad challenges facing women. Two of its members themselves migrated to Beijing from the North East and have worked in low-skilled jobs for many years. While on tour, they seek inspiration for songs from other migrant workers.

Around 282 million Chinese people are employed in urban areas, but registered as living in the countryside. While some shuttle back and forth to families at home, others have grown up in cities but are still classed as migrants by the government.

This significant demographic is marginalized and underpaid. 'Many factories require migrant workers because they do not make trouble, and wages are lower for female than for male workers,' said band member Duan Yu, in an interview for WeMedia, part of China's social networking site, Weibo.

In a distinctly apolitical music scene, their message is coming at the right time. 'The relaxation of the one-child policy in China has sparked a wider discussion about the labour conditions of women workers,' says Keegan Elmer of workers' rights organization China Labour Bulletin. He explains that women are beginning to contest barriers to career advancement and are pushing back against uneven responsibilities at home. ■

Lydia Noon

instantly: the world's readiness to ignore the plight of Darfuris; our own likely reluctance, even as readers committed to worthy causes, to read a magazine that talked about rape and genocide in a corner of Africa that we are unlikely ever to visit; the moral imperative to screw our courage to the sticking place and to consider what we ordinary people might do when statespeople had failed so miserably. Jess Worth's magazine did not duck the difficult questions – and in a perhaps unexpected way, given that she found herself having to justify to Darfuri refugees why she

Introducing...

Carrie Lam

Hong Kong has its first woman leader and her 'election' is shrouded in controversy. Carrie Lam is part of the pro-Beijing inner circle, which has been imposed on the 'city state' despite widespread protest and agitation by local democracy activists who believe Hong Kong should be electing its own leader by direct franchise.

Lam was chosen by a group of 1,194 appointed notables – she got 777 votes – in a grouping dominated by pro-Beijing loyalists. John Tsang, a former financial director who was backed by the democracy camp, finished a distant second. To no-one's surprise, ordinary Hong Kong citizens greeted the election with dismay and demonstrations. Democracy campaigner Joshua Wong called it, 'a selection rather than an election'.

Cambridge-educated Lam, now 60



Austrian Foreign Ministry under a CC license

years old, has had a career of ambitious participation in the Hong Kong civil service. Her victory is widely seen as a reward for her hardline stance against any compromise with the pro-democracy 'umbrella' movement that shook the former crown-colony in 2014.

Since coming into post, Lam is making all the right noises about defending free speech, healing and reconciliation of the democratic and autocratic poles in Hong Kong political life. However, her past reputation for high-handed arrogance in attacking the rights of villagers in the New Territories, defending bureaucratic power during the water scandal and her 2015 haughty pronouncement that there is already 'a place for her in heaven' leads many in Hong Kong to have their doubts. ■

Richard Swift

KENYA

Citizenship win for Makonde people

Nguli Mchewa is not exactly sure when he was born. He suspects it was 1940, about four years after his parents migrated from Mozambique to Kenya to work on sisal farms owned by white settlers.

The 76 year-old was born in Kenya and lived there all his life, but he has always been effectively stateless. That

believed that military intervention by the US or other Western powers would do more harm than good (nin.tl/Darfur2007).

Given the difficulty of such material, editors made a point of including elsewhere in the magazine a special feature that looked forward optimistically to one way in which the world as a whole might develop in a progressive direction over the years to 2035, with the ripples of resistance in Bolivia ultimately spreading to other continents (<https://nin.tl/Whatcomesnext>). ■

Chris Brazier

limbo ended last February when he and nearly 2,000 other members of the Makonde community were issued with an identity card and birth certificate.

'It feels like being born for the second time,' says Mchewa. 'I can finally hold my identification document, walk to an office [for government services] like any other Kenyan and get seen.'

The Makonde people won their citizenship through a long and drawn-out struggle, supported by the Kenya Human Rights Commission and the UN's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Makonde people settled in Kenya in the 1930s. Since then, the community has lived without official recognition, which condemned people to life on the margins. Without ID, they could not even register a phone SIM card, let alone seek formal employment.

The UNHCR is working with some 18,000 other stateless Kenya-born minorities, including the Shona people (featured in *Agenda*, NI 492) – originally from Zimbabwe – Somalis, Rwandans and Nubians, originally from Sudan. ■

Maina Waruru



NEW INTERNATIONALIST • JUNE 2017 • 9

Inside Unilever's sustainability myth



Amnesty – a win for Colombia's peace process?



WORLD Subvert the City

What would a city without consumerism look like? This was one of the questions in the minds of 'ad hackers' around the world when they took part in co-ordinated advertising take-over #SubvertTheCity. Over 500 corporate advertising panels were replaced last March with art work that queried consumerism and capitalism, or expressed solidarity with political struggles and oppressed groups, including refugees.

#SubvertTheCity answered a call to action from Subvertisers International, an urban art movement founded to challenge corporate advertising. Adverts were substituted or changed in over 40 cities, including Berlin, Bristol, Buenos Aires, Paris, New York, Melbourne and Tehran. ■

Aida Wilde

ITALY

Puglia obstructs 'Europe's Keystone'

Protests in southern Italy have delayed plans for construction of a vast natural-gas pipeline into Europe.

Residents of the Puglia region of southern Italy have long campaigned against Italy's section of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline or TAP (featured in Agenda, NI 496), a controversial megaproject that has been dubbed 'Europe's own Keystone XL'.

Campaigners say the \$40-billion

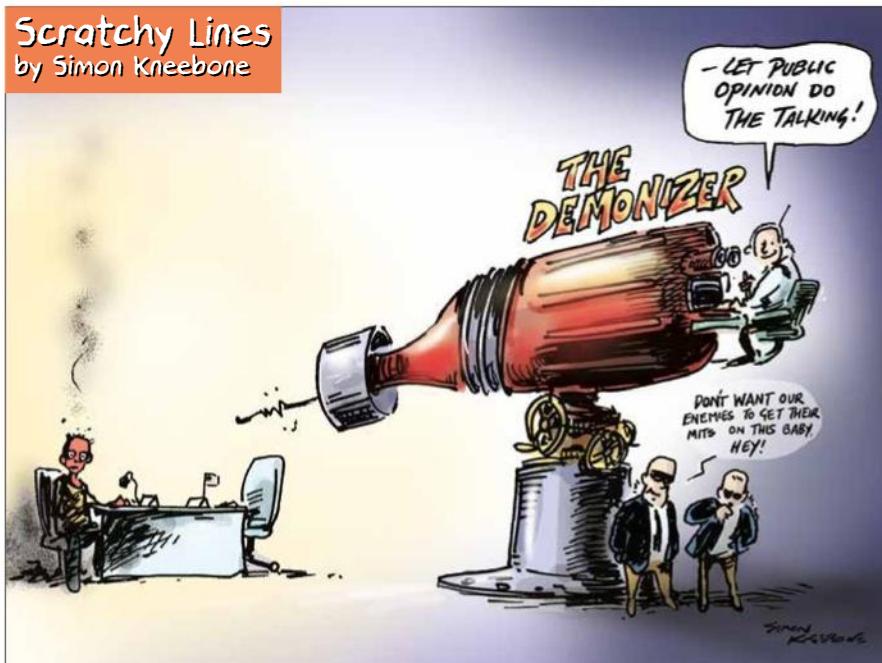
pipeline will lock European countries into fossil-fuel use for decades. Italians have other pressing concerns. They fear that their section of the 3,500-kilometre long pipeline – which stretches from Azerbaijan and enters Europe via the seaside town of San Foca – will cause significant damage to the landscape and coastline, and the loss of livelihoods.

The village of Melendugno has become a flashpoint. In March, workmen started to remove ancient olive trees in order to construct the pipeline, without permits having been issued for the work to begin. When hundreds gathered at the site to resist construction peacefully, the Italian government sent police to enforce the uprooting and removal of the trees.

In response, residents quickly organized public meetings that drew crowds of thousands. Protests started to make national headlines and international news. Over the course of the month, among sit-ins, barricades, last-minute court orders and appeals, close to 200 trees were removed.

Protestors report that work will now be delayed until November, as olive trees now go through a period of growth and cannot be removed. Locals claim this delay as a significant

Scratchy Lines by Simon Kneebone



Reasons to be cheerful

NIGERIA

Saro-Wiwa court action

Campaigners have begun legal proceedings to gain possession of a 'living memorial' to Nigerian environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Britain-based campaign group Platform shipped the eight-metre long steel sculpture – titled *The Bus* – to the Ogoni people, to be displayed as a public work of art, which would call attention to the toxic legacy left by multinationals such as Shell in the oil-rich Niger Delta.

However, the art-work never arrived. Instead, it was impounded by Nigerian customs in 2015 because of its 'political value'.

The 1.5-tonne bus, created by artist Sokari Douglas Camp, is emblazoned with the words: 'I accuse the oil companies of practising genocide against the Ogoni people', which were spoken by activist-poet Ken Saro-Wiwa.

He and eight other Ogoni environmental rights activists were sentenced and killed by a military tribunal in 1995. The names of the

other men who were executed are also inscribed on it.

The government's continued refusal to release the sculpture is seen as further proof that the state is seeking to erase the memory of Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 8, along with their struggles for justice.

It is no coincidence that the current head of the Nigeria customs service, Colonel Hammed Ali, was also a member of the kangaroo tribunal set up by former dictator Sanni Abacha, which eventually sentenced Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 8 to hang. Ali connects the current aggression from the state to the repression that began 22 years ago.

This month, Ali and the Attorney General are due to appear before the Lagos Federal High Court to explain why *The Bus* continues to be held, despite a recommendation from the National Assembly that it be released.

Whatever happens on this journey to free *The Bus*, the words of Saro-Wiwa ring true: 'you can kill the messenger, but you can never kill the message'. ■

**Celestine AkpoBari,
Ogoni Solidarity Forum**

blow to the megaproject.

They are determined to stop the pipeline altogether. Their message is for no TAP, '*né qui né altrove*' ('not here or anywhere').

The pipeline's troubles are not confined to Italy, where corruption scandals are currently making their way through the courts. Critics point out that the gas corridor would also bind the EU to the repressive regime of Ilham Aliyev in Azerbaijan, the source-country for the pipeline's natural gas.

The situation in Azerbaijan, whose autocracy is propped up by oil and gas revenues, shows no sign of improving – the country was expelled in March from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative over fresh concerns about limits on civic freedoms.

En route to Europe through Turkey, the pipeline crosses unstable Kurdish regions that have seen an escalation of violence following the collapse of peace talks between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in July 2015.

Along sections of the route in Albania and Greece, farmers say they have not been adequately consulted or compensated. ■

Sarah Shoraka

INDIA

Child brings climate law suit against government

Not many nine-year-olds would consider taking their government to court. But Ridhima Pandey is so fed up with inaction on climate change, she is attempting to do just that.

Pandey comes from Uttarakhand in northern India where extreme weather, including flash floods and landslides, have killed thousands of people in recent years.

The attorney Rahul Choudhary has filed Pandey's 52-page petition with the National Green Tribunal, a special court for environmental cases. In it, she argues government needs to take more seriously its international climate change commitments and environmental laws.

Her requests include a 'carbon budget' to limit emissions, better protection for forests and improved agricultural practices.

Pandey's passion for the planet is inspired by her father Dinesh Pandey, who works for an environmental NGO. ■

Amy Hall

Youth services un-axed

Are young people apathetic? Not in the city of Brighton and Hove where a youth-led campaign has forced government to abandon plans to cut 80 per cent of funding to their services. According to trade union UNISON, spending on youth services in the UK dropped by \$500 million 2010-16. While youth services in Brighton will still see a 15-per-cent cut, the effective campaign – which included protests and a petition – has given hope to other communities that services can be fought for, and won.

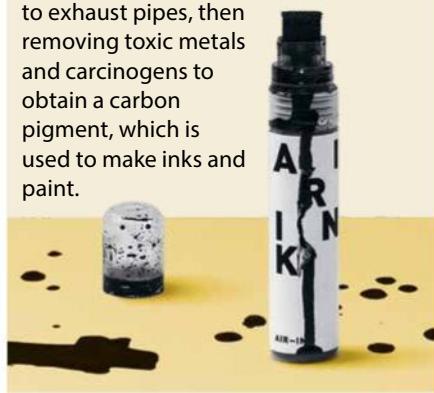


Metal-mines out!

'No to mining, yes to life' was the slogan behind the successful campaign to outlaw metal mining in El Salvador. Lawmakers voted for the ban – thought to be the first of its kind in the world – after a long battle for environmental protections in a country where an estimated 90 per cent of surface water is already polluted. Nearly three-quarters of El Salvadoreans are opposed to mining, which has caused violence and conflict in communities still struggling to recover from a bitter civil war that ended in 1992.

Exhausting ink

A tech start-up based in Singapore and India has invented a way to make ink from air pollution that they hope will reduce deaths in Asia's fast-growing cities. The firm Graviky says it is 'repurposing pollutants into tools for art' by capturing soot from vehicles and generators through a device fitted to exhaust pipes, then removing toxic metals and carcinogens to obtain a carbon pigment, which is used to make inks and paint.



Amy Hall

Finding home

House prices are through the roof. The banks are swimming in mortgage profits. Rents are sky high. Is it any wonder there are more people on the street?

WAYNE ELLWOOD searches for a homelessness remedy.

In the sharp glare of spring sunshine the

paint on the simple wooden display case is peeled and fading. It is a modest affair, the top angled in the shape of a roof, as if offering final shelter to the men and women whose names are displayed there. Fresh flowers, a solitary act of commemoration, perhaps atonement, have been placed to the side. Eight sheets of paper are pinned under glass, each sheet filled with the names of homeless people who have died – on the street, under bridges, in ravines and back allies. The Toronto Homeless Memorial sits beside an inner-city church, cheek-by-jowl with one of the city's largest downtown shopping malls.

Not far away is another Toronto. A skyward glance reveals dozens of construction cranes crowding the horizon: 50- and 60-storey towers joust with each other to get the best view of Lake Ontario. The last decade has seen a frenzy of new building in the downtown core, mostly luxury freehold flats (condominiums), a phenomenon not uncommon in other 'hedge cities'.

Across the globe money is pouring into urban centres considered safe harbours for deep-

pocketed investors. In the Toronto city centre nearly 100,000 condominium units were built between 2012 and 2016. In older residential areas the average selling price of a detached home has soared, leaping by 33 per cent in the past year alone. Meanwhile, 180,000 people are on the waiting list for subsidized housing and the city faces a \$2.6 billion repair bill for existing social housing. Buildings too costly to fix are sold: 475 units are on the block this year.

This phenomenon is widespread across the industrialized world. The US has shuttered 10,000 units of federally subsidized housing every year since the 1970s. The right to shelter is recognized by the UN in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and more than 40 countries have declared housing a basic human right. Yet, the UN estimates more than 1.6 billion people worldwide lack adequate shelter and more than 100 million are homeless. They flock to temporary shelters or sleep in public buildings like railway stations or bus terminals. Others set up house on the pavement or erect simple houses from salvaged materials on waste land.

In the global South millions living in slums from Mumbai to São Paulo have migrated to the city in search of work. The growth of these informal settlements is fuelled by rural poverty and landlessness. They live in precarious housing without tenure; they don't own the land and they lack basic services like water, sewerage and electricity. Their right to shelter often depends on the benevolence of local elites. These poor communities are tolerated or ignored until the price of land jumps and makeshift homes are 'cleared' for development under the guise of 'squatter rehabilitation'.

But homelessness in the South is also a by-product of top-down economic development.



Wayne Ellwood



Established slums are bulldozed to make way for international sporting events or glitzy shopping malls. Natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, earthquakes), climate change, civil war and political conflict also conspire to force people from their homes.

In the West our clichéd view of a homeless person is a single, older man – jobless, uprooted from family, socially isolated, mentally unstable and addicted to alcohol or drugs. And, indeed, many people living on the street do fit this category.

But these visible homeless are the tip of the iceberg. Far more numerous are those who suffer from housing insecurity. An estimated 75 per cent of people who are homeless are not on the street. These hidden homeless, often women, teens and children, sleep in shelters or double up with friends or relatives. Women are most often homeless as a result of violence. One Canadian study found that 71 per cent of women in shelters reported abuse as the reason for seeking refuge.¹

It's a similar story for young people, most of whom have either fled or been forced from home because of abuse or neglect. Without adult coping skills, often emotionally confused, homeless young people are easily exploited. On the street they are drawn into a vortex of substance abuse, victimization, violence and

sexual exploitation. A 2013 report by York University's Homeless Hub found that 82 per cent of homeless youth are victims of crime, and more than 30 per cent are sexually assaulted.²

The new precariat

There are many paths that lead to homelessness but poverty is always a key factor. The rise of low-wage, part-time jobs; the declining power of trade unions; the attack on the welfare state, and the hollowing out of industry have left people scrambling to meet rising rental costs. The poor simply cannot afford a decent place to call home. According to the Washington-based National Low Income Housing Coalition, a US worker earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour would need to work 90 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom apartment.³ Housing insecurity extends to the new 'precariat' (young people whose work is marginal and low-paid) as well as to single families, disabled people, new immigrants, refugees, 'illegal' squatters and the working poor.

Eviction and wrenching dislocation is a constant threat.

The US sociologist Matthew Desmond notes that 'if you're paying 60-80 per cent of your

Stuck on the street:
only a quarter of
families in the US that
qualify receive housing
assistance.

NickBeef/Alamy Stock Photo

income in rent, eviction becomes inevitable'. The result: broken communities and a downward spiral of neglect and suffering. In the US, says Desmond, 'the face of the eviction epidemic is moms and kids from predominantly Latino and African American neighbourhoods... About one in five Black American women renters are evicted at some point in their lives.'⁴

Lack of affordable housing is a crisis across the West. Inflated real estate markets have combined with growing wealth inequality and a systematic neglect of public provision to create a surge of homelessness.

It's no secret that market-based solutions don't work. Treating shelter as a commodity rather than a basic human right leads to what critics call the 'financialization' of housing. In essence that means a house is no longer a place to live but a source of profit. That's been good news for the banks who've been raking it in providing loans for inflated mortgages. As the gap between house prices and incomes grows the banks gladly step into the breach. According to the New Economics Foundation, domestic mortgage lending in the UK has grown from 40 to 60 per cent of GDP since the 1990s.

'It's housing disconnected from its social function,' stresses Leilani Farha, UN special rapporteur on the right to housing. Speculators treat housing as just another commodity. The result: 'Housing is as valuable whether it is vacant or occupied, lived in or devoid of life. Homes sit empty while homeless populations burgeon [because] that is the quickest way to turn a profit.'

In Melbourne, she points out, a fifth of investor-owned apartments are unoccupied, while in Chelsea and Kensington in the city of London the number of vacant units increased by 40 per cent between 2013 and 2014.⁵

Across the industrialized world skyrocketing real estate has made home ownership for the average family an impossible dream. The contradictions are stark. Luxury condos abound in booming cities like Sydney, Auckland, Hong Kong, San Francisco and Vancouver, while homeless shelters are packed, food banks can't keep up with the demand and the supply of affordable public housing stagnates or plummets.

What's clear is that unless it's forced to comply the market bends inexorably towards the wealthy.

The destructive consequences ripple out in all directions. As inequality grows rising rents and higher mortgages absorb an ever increasing chunk of net incomes.

Housing activists have a phrase for it: 'the rent eats first.'

When minimum wages are below the poverty level and social benefits like welfare or disability support are inadequate, paying the rent means less money for other expenses like food, transport, clothing, healthcare and school supplies.



Novarc Images/Alamy Stock Photo

The UK housing charity, Shelter, warns that nearly 40 per cent of renters are a month's pay away from not being able to meet the rent.

A fifth of all renting families in the US spend half their income on housing. Matthew Desmond argues that America's housing crisis 'is driving poor families to financial ruin and even starting to engulf families with moderate income.'

'Families who spend more on housing spend less on their children,' Desmond writes. 'This problem is leaving a deep and jagged scar on the next generation.'⁴

Major cities across the West are now physically divided by race and class, polarized between wealthy, gentrified urban centres and scattered pockets of poverty and privation where low-paid workers, immigrants, refugees and racialized communities find barely affordable shelter.

This stands in contrast to celebrated urbanist Jane Jacobs' view that cities need a range of class and culture to survive and thrive. Jacobs wrote famously of the need for density and diversity to support a busy streetscape and create 'eyes on the street'.⁶ Instead our major urban centres are increasingly divided along class lines. Inequality is embedded in geography.

Bailing out

As real estate markets have exploded cost-conscious governments are bailing out of the housing business while cutting social assistance and unemployment benefits.

Thirty years ago Margaret Thatcher launched the austerity model in the UK with her drive to radically shrink the role of the state. She introduced a 'right-to-buy' policy for public housing in 1980. Since then, more than 1.8 million council homes have been sold at a discount. Fewer than 10 per cent of those have been replaced, resulting in a huge loss of affordable housing. From April 2012 to November 2015 more than 40,600 homes were sold under the right-to-buy scheme

A young Angolan boy perches above an open sewage ditch in Bairro Rangel, Luanda. Slum-dwellers are often the victims of development.

while just 3,694 social housing units were built.⁷ In addition, housing benefits have been slashed by more than £5 billion, and funds for homelessness services cut by 45 per cent.

Not surprisingly the number of 'rough sleepers' has mushroomed. Shelter says more than 250,000 people are homeless across Britain. In the capital soaring rent and house prices have pushed ordinary working people out of the market. Councils are shipping homeless families to parts of the country where rents are cheaper. The number of people being housed outside their local authority has tripled in the past five years.

This trend has been repeated wherever market-based policies have come to dominate. In the US federal support for low-income housing fell by half from 1980 to 2003.

Living on the edge means struggling families are stuck in a cycle of poverty. Only a quarter of American families that qualify for housing assistance actually receive it. In Washington, DC the waiting list is more than 20 years.

Homelessness is literally deadly. A 2011 study by the British charity, Crisis, found that the lifespan of the chronically homeless is 30 years below average. They were also nine times more likely to commit suicide than the general public, and twice as likely to die of infections. Another study found that the life expectancy of the homeless in the Canadian province of British Columbia was half that of the rest of the population.⁸

Homelessness not only destroys lives, it's also expensive. It's cheaper to house someone than to leave them in limbo. The Central Florida Commission on Homelessness found that Florida residents shell out, on average, \$31,000 a year for each chronically homeless person – on things like transport, hospital visits, policing and jails. Alternatively, they found it would cost just \$10,000 a year to provide permanent housing, job training and healthcare.

Most people who work with the homeless understand this.

Here's what Canadian doctor and anti-poverty activist, Gary Bloch, wrote recently: 'Last week I saw a patient who had spent more than 10 years living in a ravine. He had been to hospital multiple times... with heart attacks, skin infections and serious depression. If he had been housed... at even the most basic standard of living... the tens of thousands of health dollars spent on him may well have been avoided.'⁹

Homelessness feeds a whole set of social pathologies. These include sub-standard education, discrimination, addictions, crime, spousal abuse, as well as issues of mental health and family well-being. Children who grow up in the shadow of homelessness struggle with school and face mental health challenges as well as behavioural problems. They often live in poverty as adults.

So we are left with an army of researchers

and academics who dissect and analyze the 'homeless problem'. And a support group of social workers, activists and NGOs who advocate on behalf of the homeless and the housing insecure.

Shifts and strategy

Nonetheless, things are changing. There has been a seismic shift over the past decade, spurred by the 'Housing First' model. Providing housing for the chronically homeless is the first step. Give people choice and control over their accommodation, combine that with support and counselling, and they are more likely to get themselves back on track (see page 16).

Housing First is an important breakthrough, but it's a partial solution.

The causes of homelessness are rooted in a complex mix of the political and the personal. If we want to stop homelessness we need to start with poverty. Employment is scarce and available jobs are poorly paid and insecure. Add to that a frayed social safety net and government support programmes that can't keep up with the rising cost of housing and rent. Lastly, are individual and social factors: people under stress are more vulnerable, less able to cope with change. The slightest shift in fortune, a loss of income or a family row, could push them over the edge.

A clear strategy for preventing homelessness involves addressing all these things simultaneously.

We must also recognize that a 'home' is more than just physical shelter. Stable housing builds stable communities. But a home is also an anchor for the soul, a place where we live out our lives. That's why homelessness is so devastating. It's both a personal tragedy and a social disaster – a loss that sabotages self-esteem as it erodes collective well-being. ■

1 Statistics Canada, nln.tl/womenCan **2** 'Local service offers support to local disadvantaged youths', *Toronto Star*, 27 December 2016. **3** NLCHP, 'No Safe Place: the criminalization of homelessness in US cities', nln.tl/NLCHP_SafePlace **4** Desmond Matthew, *Evicted, Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Penguin Random House, 2016. **5** UN Human Rights Council, Thirty-fourth session, 27 February-24 March 2017. **6** Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House, 1961. **7** Dawn Foster, 'Right to buy', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2015, nln.tl/MTRight **8** Megaphone, November 2014, <https://nln.tl/MegaDOS> **9** Gary Bloch, 'The cost of poverty affects us all', 6 December 2016, nln.tl/Star-cost

Children who grow up in the shadow of homelessness struggle with school and face mental health challenges as well as behavioural problems. They often live in poverty as adults



Housing as commodity: a protest against the changing face of London.



dpa picture alliance/Alamy Stock Photo

Breaking the cycle

SIAN GRIFFITHS reports on a no-nonsense movement which is reshaping traditional solutions to chronic homelessness.

Twenty-five years ago Sam Tsemberis was running an emergency homeless project for a New York psychiatric hospital.

'Our job was to interview people who were homeless and mentally ill and determine if they were a danger to themselves. We took them in – involuntarily. We had to call the police. It was painful work.'

'We also saw a lot of people who didn't need hospitalization. They were in bad shape and had been out there a long time.'

Tsemberis kept seeing the same faces back on the street – over and over again.

'It was obvious we needed to do something different.'

He began to ask homeless people what they wanted.

'They said they needed a place to live. I wasn't convinced.'

Housing programmes then were geared to folks who were clean and sober. 'The mindset was that people in acute distress couldn't manage their own housing.'

But these people couldn't stay sober, hated taking medication and weren't willing to try.

'That's when I got into the housing business,' Tsemberis quips.

Armed with a half-million dollar grant, he launched Pathways to Housing. The core idea:

A 'rough sleeper' camps out in a church entrance next door to the lavish Trump Tower. Housing First was launched in New York City in 1992. It has now spread across North America and beyond.

housing first. Give the homeless a roof over their head and make sure they have support. Dr Tsemberis and his team enlisted psychiatrists, social workers and nurses. Once people have their own home, he says, 'you have a better shot at treatment'.

Staying put

After five years a staggering 80 per cent of his Pathways to Housing participants had managed to stay in their homes – a far higher success rate than the traditional 'staircase' model where people transition to a permanent home through a series of steps, proving their worthiness in the process.

A wider study of this approach (now dubbed 'Housing First') across 11 US cities had a similar success rate. In addition, healthcare costs shrank and addictions were better managed.

The evidence sparked interest across America. Lloyd Pendleton, a conservative business executive and former head of humanitarian services for the Mormon Church in Utah, was sceptical.

'I was raised as a cowboy and I have said over the years, "You lazy bums, get a job, pull yourself up by the bootstraps",' he told one interviewer.

But Pendleton changed his mind after listening to Sam Tsemberis at a 2003 conference on homelessness. He learned that chronic homelessness was costly. Homeless people have increased interactions with the police, the courts, prisons and hospitals. Giving

these people stable housing with support, he found, would simply be cheaper.

Pendleton launched a pilot in Salt Lake City with 17 of ‘the most challenging chronically homeless individuals we could find’. Two years later they were still in their homes.

Pendleton then led a statewide effort to implement Housing First (HF). In 2015 the state declared an end to chronic homelessness.

The Housing First model has now spread to 20 US cities.

It’s also moved north of the border. In 2008, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) began an \$80 million study of the HF model. The five-year ‘At Home/Chez Soi’ survey concluded that 75 per cent of Canadian Housing First participants stayed in their homes. Life satisfaction was high and participants said they felt safer.

It was also cost neutral – every dollar devoted to Housing First reduced healthcare, social service and justice-related costs by a dollar. The CMHA study pegged the cost at \$10,500-\$16,500 per person per year.

The small prairie city of Medicine Hat, Alberta (population 60,000) adopted Housing First in 2009. The Mayor, Ted Clugston, recalls saying ‘some dumb things’ when he first heard about HF. But he soon became a convert. It made financial sense and it’s ‘the most humane way to treat people’. Six years later Medicine Hat had also declared an end to chronic homelessness.

‘That’s not a lot of money to get people off the street,’ says Tim Aubry, one of the CMHA study’s lead investigators and the head of the University of Ottawa’s School of Psychology.

In 2013, Canada’s then Conservative government was so impressed with the results that it committed \$450 million to roll out Housing First across the country.

The following year the blue-collar city of Hamilton, Ontario, diverted 65 per cent of its federal homelessness money into HF. ‘Transitions to Home’ (TtH), developed by Wesley Urban Ministries, has been a runaway success.

Julia Woodhall-Melnik, co-author of a McMaster University-St Michael’s Hospital study of the programme says TtH allows people ‘to be housed, regardless of other concerns they have in their lives. They are able to fare well, they are able to be stable, and we are able to save money. So it’s kind of a win-win.’

The Hamilton model also includes recreation programmes – like the Homeless Baseball League (so named by the players).

In 2015, Ottawa also adopted Housing First, teaming up with the CMHA and the Salvation Army. The city offers a \$185 ‘housing supplement’ to help homeless people find housing. It’s also stepped up social housing construction.

Chronic homelessness is costly. Homeless people have increased interactions with the police, the courts, prisons and hospitals

‘I love it here’

Shaun and Kevin, once among the capital’s long-term homeless, are clearly delighted with their new homes.

‘I love it here,’ says Shaun, 53, recalling what it was like being homeless. ‘When you are cold, it’s a bitch trying to get any sleep.’ As a youth he’d been in gangs and spent long spells in prison for robbery. He became homeless after being released from prison in the early 2000s.

A recovering heroin addict, he takes his methadone treatment in the privacy of his home and no longer has to worry about it being stolen. He credits the Salvation Army with help in finding a home – near his parents – and their support to help him get back on his feet.

Four years ago, Kevin lost the use of his left shoulder after a stroke, which his doctor told him was the result of decades of heavy drinking. He quit but found himself homeless while suffering from memory problems.

Last November, he met Rolly de Montigny, a case worker with the CMHA. A month later he was in a one-bedroom home with his son Gage who suffers from a brain injury.

Kevin said that it was important for him as an indigenous person to be near the river – but also within walking distance of the city centre.

‘I love him, Rolly, man! He’s in my family now,’ he says of Rolly, standing in the kitchen.

Rolly is currently trying to help Kevin get disability income. He also helps him meet appointments and gives him a lift to the local food bank.

Demand for affordable housing outstrips supply in Ottawa. Rent for a small apartment costs around \$600 a month. Mike Wade of the Salvation Army, says it’s a challenge to find housing his clients can afford – even when the city tops up government assistance. Tim Aubry and other frontline workers say the housing allowance should be increased.

Both Shaun and Kevin are living below the poverty line. But Housing First can’t prevent poverty.

Sam Tsemberis says the answer lies in addressing the widening income disparity between the richest and the poorest.

‘Where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, where rents are high and wages are low, more people will be left out.’

Homelessness will persist until attitudes change. ‘The extent to which we as a society have allowed ourselves to walk past a homeless person means we have lost a part of our humanity. A natural response is to get upset. But there is a solution. We don’t have to tolerate this.’ ■

Sian Griffiths lives in Ottawa. She is a freelance writer and volunteer with the Salvation Army homeless programme in her city.



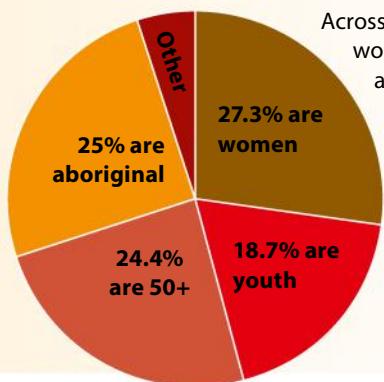
Sian Griffiths

Homelessness – The Facts

How many?

According to UN-Habitat, 1.1 billion people live in inadequate housing in urban areas – and at least 100 million have no housing whatsoever. This number is expected to increase to 1.6 billion by 2025.¹ As many as 4 million Europeans and 3.5 million US citizens experience homelessness every year.

Who are they?

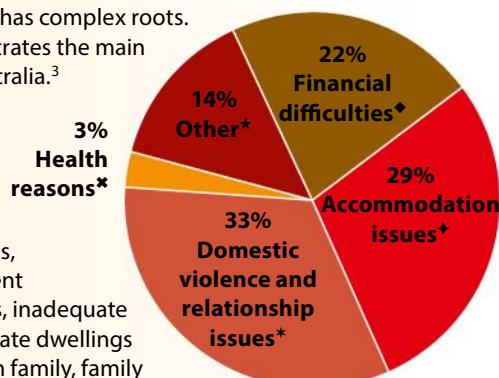


Across the rich nations more women, youth and families are becoming homeless. This chart shows the breakdown of the 235,000 Canadians who experience homelessness in a year:²

Why are they homeless?

Homelessness has complex roots.

This chart illustrates the main reasons in Australia.³

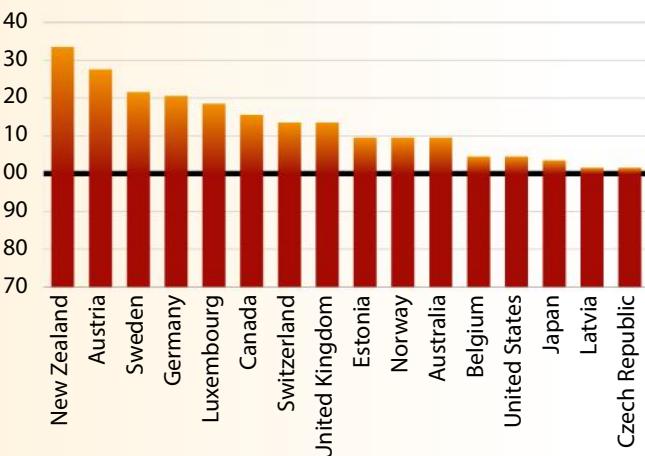


- * housing stress, unemployment
- ♦ housing crisis, inadequate or inappropriate dwellings
- ♦ time out from family, family breakdown, violence and assault
- * mental health issues, substance abuse issues
- * transition from care, custody, lack of support, discrimination

Unaffordable housing

House Price-to-Income Ratio (2016, 2010=100)

House prices are growing faster than incomes in many countries. If we use 2010 as the base year house prices in 2016 outstripped incomes by 35% in New Zealand, 15% in the UK and almost 10% in Australia.



imf.org/external/research/housing/

- For 70% of the world's city dwellers the median house price is 5 times the annual household income, well above the recommended ratio of 3 times. Just 13% of global cities have affordable housing of any kind.⁴
- From 2002-12 a typical London, UK home sold for 7 times the city's average annual salary. Today the figure is 12 times.⁵
- 1 in 5 renter households in Canada pay more than 50% of their income on rent.⁶
- 1 in 4 families in the US spend over 70% of their income on rent and utilities.⁷
- There are 33,000 people on the waiting list for public housing in the Australian state of Victoria. Less than 1% of private rental properties in and around Melbourne are affordable for single parents on low incomes.⁸

Shelter saves money

- In Canada, every \$10 spent on housing and support for the chronically homeless results in \$21.72 in savings on healthcare, social supports, housing and the criminal justice system.⁹
- An Australian study found that preventing young people from becoming homeless by strengthening school and youth services at a community level could save \$626 million a year.¹⁰

- The Central Florida Commission on Homelessness found the state spends \$31,000 a year on each chronically homeless person. The cost of providing each of them with permanent housing, job training and healthcare was \$10,000 a year.

¹ UN Human Settlements Programme, unhabitat.org

² The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016, nin.tl/HCan2016 ³ Australian Broadcasting Association, nin.tl/HVic2016 ⁴ UN-Habitat, nin.tl/13housing ⁵ 'Hot in the city', 2 April 2016, *The Economist*. ⁶ Beyond Housing First, a holistic response to family homelessness in Canada, 2015, nin.tl/BHF-Canada ⁷ Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Property in the American City*, 2016. ⁸ Justice Connect, 'Keeping Women and Children Housed', 2017, nin.tl/JC-house

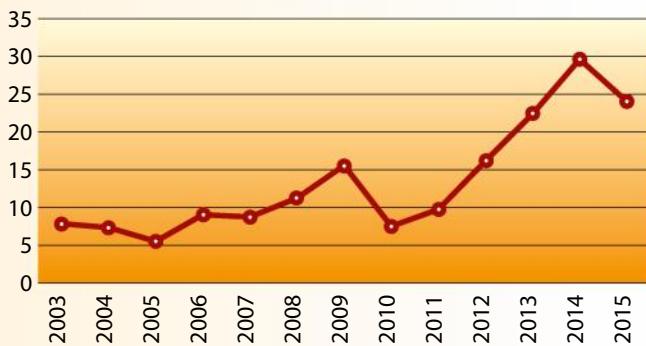
Public Health Emergency¹⁵

- Homeless people are 2-5 times more likely to die prematurely than the general population.
- Rates of tuberculosis infection are 20 times higher; rates of depression are 7 times higher.
- In Britain the homeless are 4 times more likely to use emergency hospital services at a cost of about £85 million (\$106 m) a year.
- In the US the rate of tobacco use by the homeless is 4 times that of the overall population.

Violence, disasters & development

In 2015, 27.8 million people in 127 countries were forced to flee their homes because of conflict, violence and disasters – more than the total populations of New York, London, Paris and Cairo combined.¹⁴

Newly displaced persons per minute, 2003 – 2015



Source: UNHCR

- 75% of the world's internally displaced people – 30 million – are located in just 10 countries – including Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan.
- Disasters displaced 19.2 million people in 113 countries in 2015. Over the past 8 years 203.4 million people fled their homes due to natural disasters.
- 15 million people a year since the mid-2000s have been forced out of their homes by development schemes such as dams, urban renewal projects and mega-sporting events.

Race

- Native Canadians are 10 times more likely than non-indigenous to end up in an emergency shelter. Nearly 1 in 5 native people who live off reserve are homeless.¹¹
- African Americans make up 12% of the US population but nearly 40% of the people in homeless shelters.
- About 1 in 5 Black women renters in the US are evicted at some point in their lives. For white women the figure is 1 in 15.¹²
- Aboriginal people have 14 times the rate of homelessness of non-Indigenous Australians.¹³

⁹ Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014, *At Home/Chez Soi*, 2014, MHCCat-home

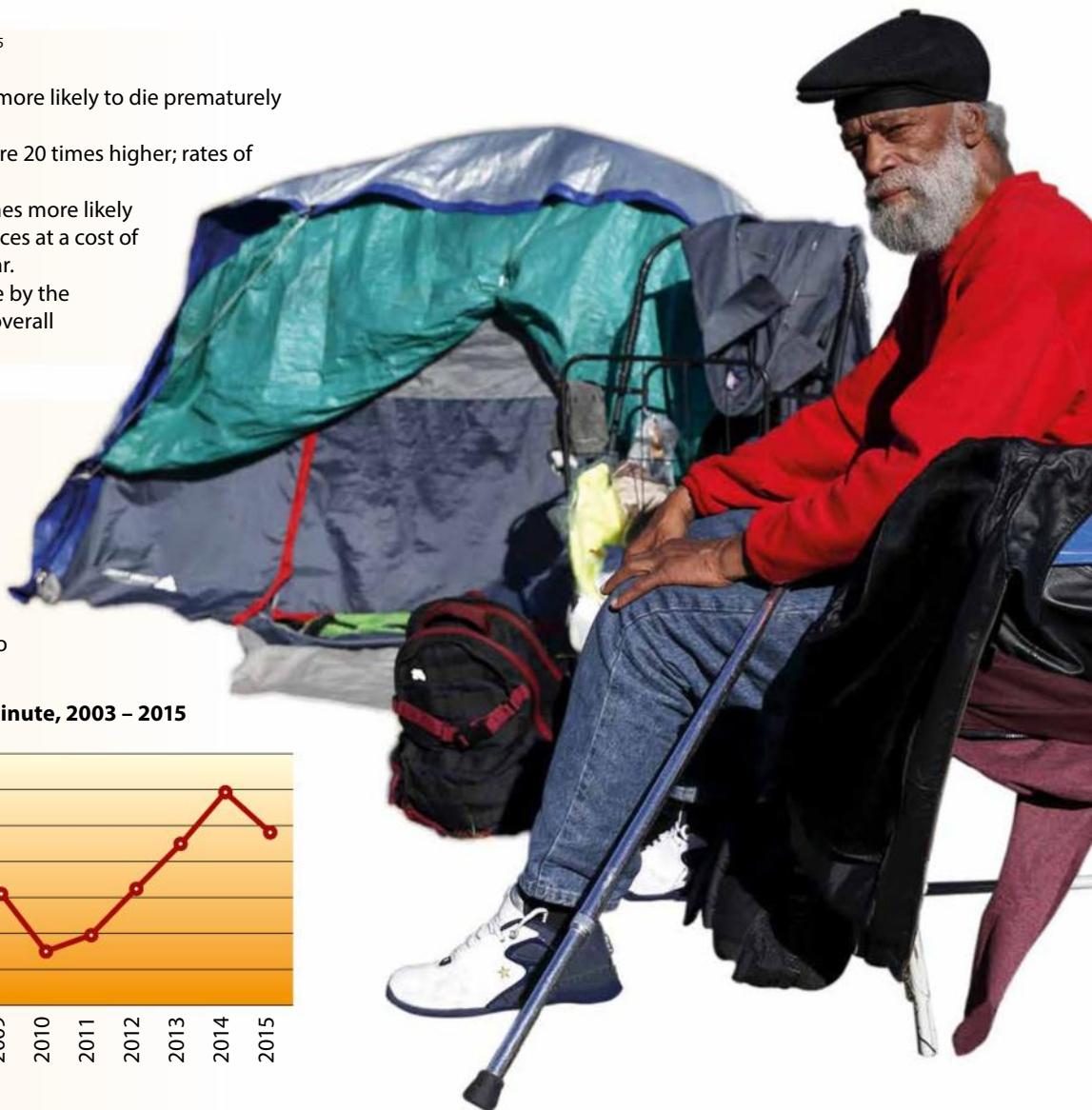
¹⁰ *The cost of youth homelessness in Australia*, 2016, missionaustralia.com.au

¹¹ National Shelter Study 2005-2014, nin.tl/GovCanNS 12 Desmond, see 7. 13 Australian Government, nin.tl/AIHW-IA 14 IDMC, 2016, nin.tl/IDMCgrid 15 'The health of homeless people in high-income countries', *The Lancet*, October 2014, nin.tl/health-hope

¹⁶ Homelessness Australia, 2013, HA-2013 17 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, nlchp.org 18 'Risk of Death Among Homeless Women', homelesshub.ca

¹⁹ Ending Youth Homelessness: A human rights guide, nin.tl/youth-rights

²⁰ Covenant House Toronto, nin.tl/cohortor



Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Women

Women fleeing violence, often accompanied by children, are a significant part of the 'hidden homeless', often moving between home, shelters and friends or relatives.

- 40-50% of homeless people are women and nearly 60% of people seeking specialist homelessness services are female.¹⁶
- More than 90% of homeless women have suffered physical or sexual abuse; escaping that abuse is a leading cause of their homelessness.¹⁷
- Homeless women between 18-44 are 10 times more likely to die prematurely than women the same age in the general population.¹⁸

Youth

Homeless youth make up a growing portion of the homeless. Children living on the streets are especially vulnerable to victimization, exploitation and abuse.

- 1.9 million teens are homeless each year in the US. In the UK over 83,000 youth were homeless in 2014, while in Canada 35,000 youth are homeless annually.¹⁹
- Half of homeless kids are from middle and upper income families. On average they leave home at age 15. More than 70% have suffered some form of abuse.²⁰
- There are an estimated 150 million street kids in India.
- In the US, UK and Canada 20-40% of homeless teens identify as LGBT+.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a \$15 billion plan last year to develop 100 'smart cities' by 2022. The effort is supposed to revolutionize urban India, building wired cities and modern infrastructure. But not everyone is happy, especially the victims of progress. NIMISHA JAISWAL reports from Bhubaneswar.

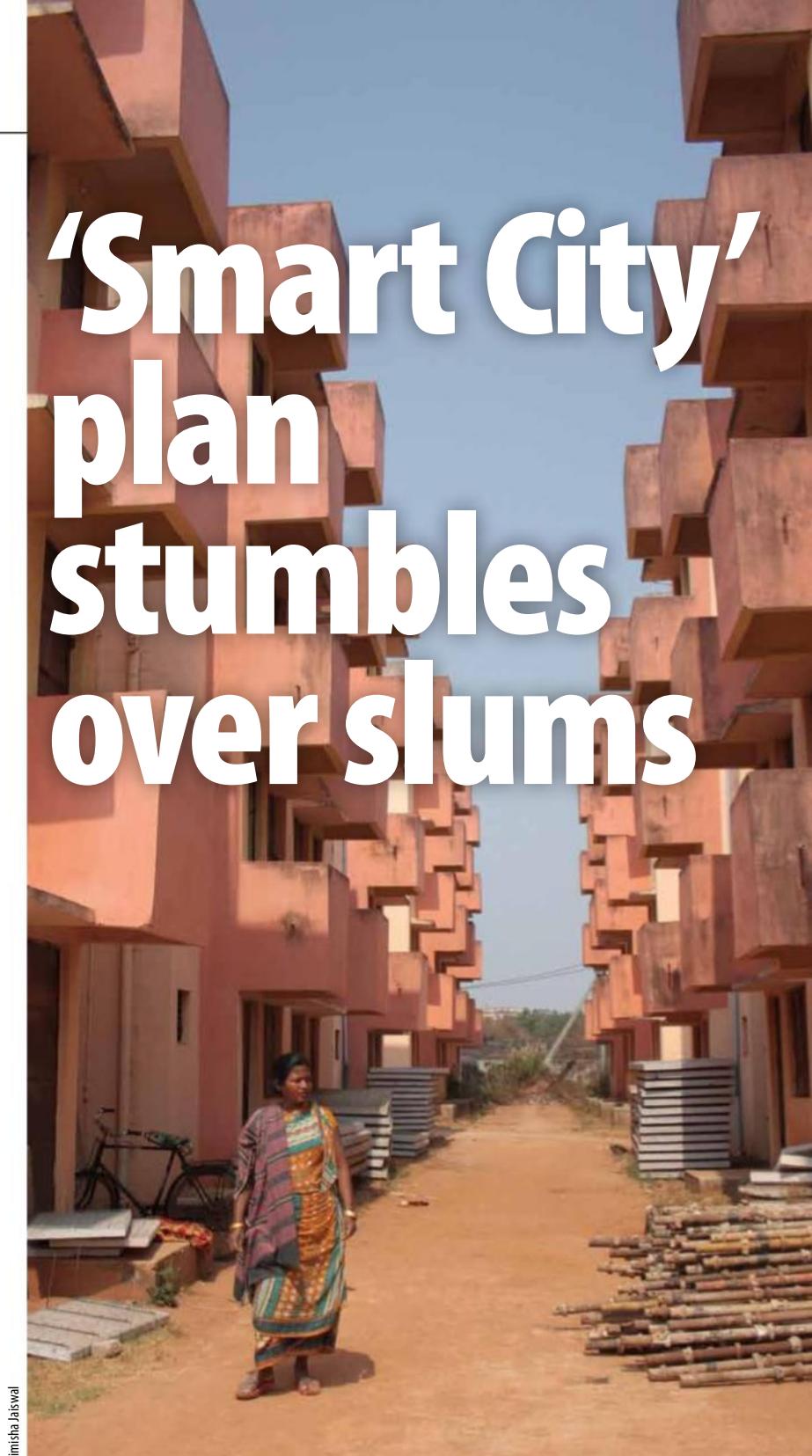
Prashant Kumar Das sat outside his home

staring into the distance. A few hundred metres away a block of unpainted grey apartment buildings lay deserted. The 58-year-old lives in Bhubaneswar, a city in Odisha state about 400 kilometres southwest of Calcutta.

'When they brought us here they told us they'd give us concrete houses in three months,' he recalls. Behind him his self-built house consists of tin sheets, discarded signboards and thatched wicker, with a line of washed clothes strung in front. Eighty other similar homes crowd around his. 'It's been over a year now and we haven't even been assigned transit houses yet.'

Until last year Das lived in a brick-and-mortar house he had built in Venkateshwar, one of the oldest slums in the city. Then in January 2016, Das and 80 other families were given \$100, a plastic bag for their belongings and told to clear the area. A decision had been made to construct municipal offices at the site of the slum. They were driven to a deserted plot of grassy land behind the apartment complex and told to construct temporary shelters 'for a few months' until they could be assigned transit houses.

Venkateshwar falls within the area earmarked for the first phase of Bhubaneswar's Smart City project. India's 'Smart City Mission', the brainchild of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to transform select cities across the country into models of technological and infrastructural innovation. Under the wing of the Ministry of Urban Development every Smart City is supposed to feature housing for all, comprehensive public transport, green spaces, walkable streets, dependable water, electricity and internet connectivity, and citizen-friendly governance.



Nimisha Jaiswal

In 2015, 98 cities across the country took part in the Smart City Challenge by submitting proposals detailing plans. There were 20 cities shortlisted but Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, won the competition.

Today, hoardings across the city still boast of this achievement. But the 300,000 slum-dwellers in this city of a million people are far from pleased.

'They want to build up a new class, a city within a city,' says Suresh Panigrahi of the Odisha Basti Basinda Mahasangha, a slum-dwellers' rights group. 'The corporate loot of land will take place under the Smart City project.'

In Bhubaneswar a woman wanders through a deserted apartment complex built under the 15-year-old Basic Services for the Urban Poor scheme. The city and slum residents blame each other for the delay in assigning the 192 empty apartments.

'We made this city'

Like other major cities in India, Bhubaneswar has seen a steady stream of rural to urban migration over the last two decades. Most of city's slum residents came in search of work, driven from small towns and villages by rural poverty and debt.

This migration has sparked a steady rise in the illegal occupation of land and the chaotic construction of new slum housing. Many of these homes are made of bricks and cement. None of the tenants have legal deeds or the city's sanction. Electricity lines and water supplies are ingeniously diverted from the main lines.

Yet, the city's relationship with the slums is symbiotic. The oldest slums house families that provided cheap manual labour, workers who built the apartments, office towers and even the railway lines of the rapidly growing city.

'They scold us for making illegal houses,' says Ramraj Sharma, a slum-dweller and activist. 'But they don't see that we've made this smart city with our own hands. We clean their homes, we make their food.'

Krishan Kumar, managing director of Bhubaneswar's Smart City project and the city's Municipal Commissioner, denies that the plan will leave slum-dwellers in the lurch.

'We were certain that issues relating to social equity had to be addressed because the plan had been criticized for being an elitist programme. That is why we included slum redevelopment, social equity centres and affordable housing as part of the proposal.'

According to Kumar, half the people in the Smart City area are slum-dwellers and city administrators are determined that no-one should be uprooted. The plan includes four housing programmes aiming at building an ambitious 6,000 houses for 5,600 urban poor families. Kumar expects construction to begin in September.

'The basic idea is that housing for all should happen quicker than 2022,' Kumar explains. 'This plan should lead to the improvement of the lives of slum-dwellers. They should feel happy about Smart City.'

Us against them

So far, however, Bhubaneswar's poor have little reason to embrace the Smart City plan. For the most part that's because they have no inkling about what the plan is.

'Smart City is about maintaining cleanliness in your home and on the roads,' says Apna Rao, a 28-year-old resident of the Banphul slum. Nearby, garbage lay strewn over an empty plot and a rooster picked its way through the crowd.

Several women crowded around Rao, listening. Their skin had a yellowish cast, likely jaundice.

'I hear about the plan when they say: "Oh, they're demolishing something for Smart City".

'They scold us for making illegal houses. But they don't see that we clean their homes, we make their food'

That's all I know,' adds TN Behra, a 45-year-old from Sai Nath slum.

When asked what they knew about the plan, residents from five different slums said they'd had no visits from city officials to gather their input about the Smart City proposal or to inform them about the changes they can expect under the plan.

The communication gap between city administrators and slum-dwellers (coupled with rallying cries of activist groups across the political spectrum) has led Bhubaneswar's poor to believe that the city wants to be rid of them because they don't fit in the picture of rapid development.

'There are illegal flats constructed nearby but those rich people keep sending city officials here instead, telling them to tear down the slum first,' says Sai Nath resident Govindchandra Pujari. Sai Nath is one of the city's older slums and has a strong history of resistance. Residents claim they received no notice from the city about the demolition. They've turned away demolition teams twice in two months.

Smart City is not the first slum redevelopment scheme. Residents across Bhubaneswar are well aware of previous 'housing for all' plans. The previous government ran the Rajeev Awas Yojana or Rajeev Housing Scheme, widely known as RAY.

Under RAY thousands of slum houses were assigned numbers, so a record of 'permanent' residents could be maintained. Sai Nath claims to have been cheated of this right as well.

'There is no record of this area,' notes Pujari. 'And when we ask for land title deeds, they turn us away.'

Meanwhile, Commissioner Kumar claims the Venkateshwar evacuation is not slum redevelopment in the usual sense. It was a 'unique' situation because the land was urgently required, he said. The 67 families had to be cajoled to move to a 'temporary location' but he insists they will be assigned transit houses soon.

Prashant Kumar Das is not happy with the thought of a transit house. At 10 by 10 feet

Prashant Kumar Das in front of his temporary home. Last year he was forced from a brick-and-mortar house, his home for 25 years, so municipal offices could be constructed at the site of the old slum.



Nimisha Jaiswal

with a small window, the transit houses are definitely small. Slum-dwellers imagine them to be restrictive, taking away the option to expand their living spaces.

Those who have moved into the transit houses, however, have found their way around these restrictions.

'I like it here; there is free water, electricity and shelter,' says Yana Janaki, a 65 year old woman who was relocated from Narayan slum seven years ago. 'Why would I leave?'

When over a 100 families from Narayan were shifted to transit houses in 2010, 80 families stayed on to fight the move in the Odisha High Court. They won.

Janaki was a part of the resistance but now she is satisfied with her new quarters. It is still just one small room per family, but several have erected tin sheds and constructed attachments to form a messy but larger living space.

Herculean Task

Despite mixed opinions, the rehousing of 300,000 people is a massive undertaking. 'We are moving in a phased manner with the objective of starting 10,000 houses this year,' says Commissioner Kumar. 'We are trying to develop many houses *in situ* or close to the original slums so the lives of the residents are not dislocated.'

In February 2017, the state government began to look at hiring specialist NGOs to bridge the communication gap between authorities and slum residents.

Indeed, documenting each slum resident and verifying their claims to subsidized housing could take years.

At the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) office of Anand Patnaik, thousands of loose papers line tall shelves along the walls. They are documents from the RAY surveys conducted under the last government.

'There are 24 slums under the Smart City plan,' explains Patnaik. 'I am sure those people have doubts. But there is nothing in those disorganized settlements, they live without any facilities.'

Patnaik mentioned 3,660 houses currently under construction, 120,000 houses to be completed under RAY and 902 transition houses that are to be assigned 'soon'.

Both BMC and Smart City officials are well versed with the statistics. And while 80,000 families fit deftly into their calculus, city authorities struggle to assign the few houses that have been built.

The challenge is not lost on city authorities.

When asked about the likelihood of completing the Smart City project before 2022, the BMC's Patnaik smiled and said, 'No comment.' ■

Nimisha Jaiswal is a freelance writer based in Delhi. She is a frequent contributor to New Internationalist.

Homeless voices

Civil war, mental illness, poverty, gang violence: housing insecurity has many roots.

THE PHILIPPINES

Maria Precilda met her partner Marvin Bueta in 2014. It was love at first sight. Now a young mother, she lives with her family in one room in a Manila slum.

I was working as a cook for a middle-class family in a city to the east of Manila.

I had left my hometown in the southern province of Leyte to find a job. We didn't have a lot of money so I had to stop school to support my parents and two siblings.

And then I met Marvin. He was a construction worker across the street from where I worked. He took my breath away. I got pregnant and had to stop my job as a cook. Marvin brought me to his parents in Bicol, a province in the south. I couldn't go home because I was afraid to tell my parents I was pregnant. I was only 21.

He had to go back to Manila to earn a living while I stayed with his family in their village. There were more than 10 of us who shared a cramped space. I slept in the living room; all the time my belly was growing.

After I had the baby Marvin and I needed to find our own place. We did not know where to start. We stayed with Marvin's brother and his family in a slum area in Manila for two months. It was another cramped space. And again we slept in the living room. Sometimes our baby cried and woke up the whole household. It was difficult, not good for anyone.

Finally, we had to move. We found a room for rent in the nearby block. It cost \$50 a month. It's expensive and eats a huge chunk of Marvin's monthly income of \$119. I can't work yet because I have to take care of our baby, Mark. So this is our home for now.

Interview by **Iris Gonzales**.



Iris Gonzales

BRITAIN

Amanda Dunn lives in Luton just outside London. The 47-year-old mother of three lost her job at a local airport and was evicted when she couldn't pay the rent. She's been in a B&B for the past 6 months with her 13-year-old twin daughters.

I lived in a two-bed flat. One of the bedrooms I had to shut off because of the damp. Central heating wasn't working or the cooker. Eventually I called the council. They served the landlord notice to repair it. At this point I refused to pay the rent – I told him 'You've got to come and fix the heating' – he refused. So it ended up in court. I got evicted and then we were put here.

I had to apply for housing benefit which took forever. When the woman from the council came she said, 'There's an eight to nine year waiting list for council properties here in Luton... Your best option is to start looking further north.'

My daughter Katie is just like a stick. She gets stuffed with takeaways every night but the dietician said it's not the sort of food she should be having. And there have been a couple of instances at school where Rachel has shouted at teachers. They understand though – it's not like Rachel at all to lose it.

My own mental and emotional health has got worse. I just cry. All the time. I can't sleep without sleeping tablets.

We looked at a place by the airport. The man was happy with me being on benefits, the woman called me scum.

I want nothing more than to get a job. I've always worked – but you go to these interviews and they look at your address and ask: 'Why are you in a hotel?'

Original interview provided by Shelter. Edited by Amy Hall.



Shelter

US

Derek Chartrand Wallace lives in Berkeley, California. He is a 37-year-old, full-time college student surviving on financial aid.

A few semesters ago I experienced serious mental trauma including crippling social anxiety, depression and insomnia. I'd never been through anything like that before and was totally unprepared for the effects on my home life, friendships and studies. I couldn't afford a therapist which meant I had to struggle on my own. I've only recently started to get my life back together.

In the interim my marks suffered which meant that the financial aid I rely on was put on hold. I couldn't afford the room I was renting so I had to put my stuff in storage and start staying with friends and co-workers. That gets old fast so this year I've often been on the street, sleeping in abandoned buildings, construction sites, even in empty trucks.

Lately I have been using my storage space as a safe house at night. But it is against the rules so who knows how long I can keep that up? Dodging police is always a thrill a minute and being 'homeless under cover' has felt a lot like being a superhero with a secret identity.

Homeless shelters here are on a needs basis so the elderly, disabled, women and children have first priority over able-bodied males like me. I applied for Food Stamps [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program] but was rejected for being a full-time student on financial aid (even though it is on hold). But there is a lottery for low/no-income dwellings through the County Housing Authority and I'm going to apply for that.



Nithin Coca

MEXICO

Threatened by gang violence, Osman Rivera, fled his home in Honduras. The 48-year-old father narrowly escaped kidnapping as he travelled north to Mexico.

I've been working for 30 years painting cars. But the *pandillas* (gangs) charge what's called a 'war tax'. If you don't pay, they kill you or your family. I was making only enough to cover costs and pay the tax.

I left on 13 December 2016. I crossed the Guatemala border, then travelled to Mexico. After that I took a combi (van-bus) with six other migrants and two Mexicans. After one of the Mexicans got off, a black combi without number plates began to follow us. It was late and the black combi kept trailing us. I was suspicious.

When our bus stopped to allow the other Mexican to leave, I jumped out too. The road was on the edge of a steep hill and I rolled down. The others were kidnapped [migrants are robbed and held to extort money from their families]. Armed men used lights to look for me. I stayed in a ditch filled with water. I waited six hours, then at midnight made my way to the road. A man on a bike told me the immigration police were near so I went into the forest and kept walking. Eventually I got a lift. I arrived in Mexico City on 30 December.

At the moment I'm staying in the Tochan migrant refuge. I'm sleeping on a mattress on the floor in the common room, because all the rooms are full. My plan is to legalize my stay here and eventually go to Baja California to start a car painting shop. I want to help my family. I have a seven-year-old boy and I want to give him a future.



Tamara Pearson

Interview by Nithin Coca.

Interview by Tamara Pearson.

Escape to the street

More young people are turning up on the street in cities and towns across the West. In Australia, over 40 per cent of the homeless are under 25. CATHERINE YEOMANS of Mission Australia argues that early intervention is the key to the problem of homeless youth in the 'Lucky Country'.

Jemma left home when she was 14.

She'd felt unsafe for years and was living in a violent and unstable home in rural Australia. Her brother was physically abusive – he once tried to stab her. She had a strained relationship with her father, arguing endlessly. Jemma's mother was clinically depressed which left Jemma to raise her baby sister while juggling school and adolescence.

'It was too much. One day I left for school and just didn't come back,' Jemma recalls.

With that decision she became one of more than 40,000 young people in Australia who are homeless on any given night.

Jemma felt that leaving her family home was the safest option. She bunked with friends until she had worn out her welcome. At school, without a place to call home, things became increasingly fraught.

'I couldn't stand being at home but school was just as bad. I had no friends and people weren't listening.'

Eventually Jemma was referred to a youth crisis centre where she found emotional support and safe shelter. The service, run by Mission Australia, helped her find accommodation as well as counselling her in daily living skills and helping her balance school and a part-time job. If she hadn't found a place to stay, Jemma says, she would have quit school and worked at a fast food restaurant to make ends meet.

'If I was living between houses I would have found it hard to work, go to school and be my own parent at the same time.'

Jemma was fortunate. She found a youth crisis centre near her home. Many vulnerable young Australians aren't so lucky. There are not enough beds, social workers or safe places to stem the rising tide of youth homelessness. Of the estimated 105,000 homeless in Australia 44,000 are under age 25. Services are stretched: 40 per cent of young people who need short-term or emergency housing are turned away.

Standing out for the wrong reasons

On the global stage Australia stands out. The nation's cities rank high for 'liveability', with Melbourne topping the list in 2016, followed closely by Adelaide and Perth. Despite a quarter century of strong economic growth, the country continues to leave the most vulnerable of the younger generation behind. The OECD estimates Australia's child poverty rate at 13 per cent. According to the Australian Council of Social Services, one in six kids – 700,000 children under age 15 – are living in poverty. And that figure has grown over the past decade.

According to the recent Child and Youth Homelessness Report, one in seven Australians aged 15-19 are at risk of homelessness.¹ When life at home is dangerous or emotionally damaging these young people choose to leave. A quarter of them reported fleeing home more than 10 times over a three-year period.

Vulnerable young people face complex challenges: domestic violence, mental health issues, addictions, fractured family relationships, poverty and alienation from school. We know from experience that both long-term and short-term prospects for homeless youth are not good – they often drop out, lose the support of friends and have a much higher incidence of mental illness. On the streets they may be exposed to unsafe environments and dangerous situations.

Bouts of couch-surfing can lead to long term homelessness. Some young people develop a sense of belonging in the homeless subculture and may come to accept it as a way of life.

Homelessness in Australia is exacerbated by housing affordability. We have the third most expensive housing on the planet. For decades there has been a lack of government

Indigenous youth: not so lucky

- Indigenous people are less than 3 per cent of Australians but are 14 times more likely to be homeless than non-Indigenous.
- Indigenous Australians are 35 times more likely to live in overcrowded dwellings; this is more severe in rural and remote areas. For children this can lead to poor health, domestic violence and disrupted education.
- Over half of the Aboriginal people accessing specialist homelessness services are under 25. Nearly 1 in 4 are under 10.

investment in social and affordable housing. Sky-high rents squeeze poor families and young people, driving them down the pipeline to homelessness.

Turning off the tap

So what needs to be done? We think halving youth homelessness by 2020 is achievable with the right policy settings and support from the community.

The key is to address the risk factors beforehand rather than waiting until a young person is homeless. We need early and rapid intervention to ‘turn off the tap’ of homelessness.

‘Reconnect’ is one such programme that is delivered across Australia. The focus is on family reconciliation where possible. The programme also helps secure housing, as well as offering job training and engagement with the wider community. But as with many initiatives dependent on government funding Reconnect is constantly threatened by funding cuts.

Charcoal Lane, Mission Australia’s social enterprise restaurant in Melbourne, is another approach that works. The restaurant dishes up fine cuisine featuring local ingredients while providing jobs to young Aboriginal people who may be on the cusp of homelessness. They gain both qualifications and experience in a supportive environment. After working at Charcoal Lane young people are prepared for the job market.

Take Stephen. Now in his early 30s, Stephen had a tough childhood. He experienced and witnessed violence in his family. He moved house regularly and was placed in foster care for much of his young life. As a teen he turned to methamphetamine and was spiralling toward homelessness. A life-threatening heart attack led him to Charcoal Lane.

‘I had no sense of identity or belonging. I felt disconnected from my culture and unhappy because I was moving around so much,’ Stephen says. ‘The programme made a bigger difference than I could possibly have imagined. As much as it was learning to work in a busy commercial kitchen, it was equally about the structure, responsibility and sense of community that came with it.’

In the face of budget cuts and fiscal conservatism non-governmental agencies like Mission Australia are trying to pick up the slack but are at risk of buckling under the pressure of increased need and uncertain funding.

Some young people develop a sense of belonging in the homeless subculture and may come to accept it as a way of life

One of the Government’s key funding mechanisms, the National Partnership Agreement for Homelessness (NPAH) has been the subject of last minute announcements and short-term rollovers, severely impacting the ability of agencies to operate efficiently and to plan. While we are glad that many essential homelessness services won’t have to shut their doors this year we are disappointed the funding does not extend beyond one year.

Without more affordable housing, a commitment to targets and a long-term plan – and funding to achieve them – the number of young people who are homeless will climb.

Towards the end of this year the Australian Bureau of Statistics will publish their 2016 data on homelessness. Indications are that the number will be far worse than the last data cited from 2011.

Until we see a monumental shift and commitment from government at all levels to tackle this problem, Australia will continue to be the unlucky country for the thousands of children and young people without a safe place to call home. ■

Catherine Yeomans is the CEO of Mission Australia, one of the country’s largest social agencies. She is based in Sydney.

1 Home & Away: Child and Youth Homelessness Report, February 2016, Mission Australia.

Mission Australia

Crashing on a park bench: when young people feel stressed or threatened the street can seem like the safest option.



Raising t

Canada The RAFT

The Raft is a drop-in centre and hostel for homeless youth in St Catharines, Ontario, a small town in the province's fruit growing belt, a 20-minute drive from Niagara Falls. The Raft has supported thousands of young people, providing programmes and resources, and helping them to become independent and self-sufficient.

The centre started in 1994 in response to an interfaith task force on the lack of services for at-risk and homeless youth. Funding comes from service clubs, community groups, churches and individuals. The RAFT began as a drop in centre operating five nights a week but has since expanded to include a 16-bed hostel as well as a range of community-based youth projects.

The community development initiatives are preventive, aimed at reducing the number of at-risk youth in the Niagara region. For example, their 'Eternal Routes programme' aims to reunite kids unable to live with their parents with relatives who are willing to provide them with the support they need to transition into adulthood and avoid homelessness.

The goal is to help young people take control of their lives, to build self-esteem and confidence while empowering them to become involved members of their community.

theraft.ca



Chile The Resilient Social Housing Project

The 2010 earthquake and tsunami destroyed more than 11,000 homes and other buildings on the Chilean coast – shattering communities and people's livelihoods. The original plan was to move people quickly into new housing away from the sea. But local communities weren't keen. They wanted to stay where they were and to continue their traditional lifestyle of fishing and collecting algae.

So a demonstration project was conceived. Local residents whose homes had been destroyed were canvassed for their ideas and input. As a result 180 'stilt houses' were built in 5 villages. The new houses were designed to survive natural disasters. They are earthquake proof and can be quickly and easily repaired if battered by future tsunamis.

The costs – about \$25,000 per house – were covered by the Chilean government's Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. So the residents were able to acquire their new homes without going into debt. Annual upkeep is their responsibility, much easier since they continue to earn their living from the sea.

This pioneering approach to social housing in Chile has shifted the goal-posts and should become a model for new social housing initiatives across the country.

nin.tl/ChileRSH

Around the world people are fighting the stigma of homelessness and finding innovative shelter solutions. Here's a round-up of some of those inspired ideas and practices.

UK

Stonewall Housing

Since 1983 Stonewall Housing has provided housing advice, advocacy and support for LGBT+ people who are frequently discriminated against when trying to find decent, affordable housing. Stonewall develops awareness and procedures that create equal access to services. People who are vulnerable to double discrimination, such as LGBT+ refugees and migrants, are also helped to overcome barriers in their housing search.

Services include a free, confidential housing advice helpline; drop-in housing advice workshops; specialist and awareness training for social housing staff and tenants; providing consultancy and information to other agencies about housing for LGBT+ people; and lobbying and campaigning for their housing rights.

Stonewall Housing's aim is to ensure that people live in safer homes, free from fear, where they can celebrate their identity and support each other to achieve their full potential. Their projects focus on addressing social inequalities, helping their clients to stay engaged in wider society.

Stonewall Housing has launched a number of much-needed projects including one that challenged Forced Marriage, ROAR (a project on domestic abuse) and Finding Safe Spaces (aimed at rough sleepers).

stonewallhousing.org

**stonewall
housing**



the roof



Jordan Urban Shelter Project

This project works with Jordanian owners to refurbish uninhabitable properties to create homes that are then leased to Syrian refugees, rent-free for 18 months. Funds are used to subsidize the refurbishments, which has a positive impact on the local economy by increasing the availability of housing and providing jobs. More than 5,000 housing units have been improved, providing housing for over 18,000 refugees and creating over 20,000 short-term jobs.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) provides funding to bring the properties up to scratch. The NRC also provides legal aid to Syrian refugees to help them with civil documentation, refugee registration, and housing, land and property rights.

The project has revitalized the local economy with more than \$10 million in new investment, and continues to fundraise to renovate additional properties.

nir.tl/UrbanShelter



Many of these examples are drawn from the World Habitat Awards launched in 1987 by Britain's Building and Social Housing Foundation and run in partnership with UN-Habitat. For more information see worldhabitatawards.org

Sri Lanka 50,000 Houses for War Survivors

When Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war finally ended in 2009 tens of thousands of displaced families in refugee camps were eager to return home – to land they had owned before the war. After such a bloody conflict, community life was shattered, relationships broken and houses in ruin. People returning home lived in makeshift, temporary shelters often without electricity or other services.

That's when the Indian government decided to step in with an offer of resettlement aid. (No doubt prompted by the millions of Tamils living in southern India). The result was the 50,000 Houses project, launched in 2012 with \$240 million to support self-help housing and development programmes. The target is to fund 50,000 houses for 225,000 people. To date 45,200 houses have been completed.

The self-help approach planted seeds for people-led recovery. Owners were put in charge of building instead of contractors; housing grants were given to individual families. Encouraging people to make their own decisions and manage their finances built confidence. This culture of self-help is reflected in the quality of the houses, the speed of construction and in the confidence displayed in meeting other challenges.

Partner agencies (UN-Habitat, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Habitat for Humanity and Sri Lanka's National Housing Development Authority) provided logistical support and technical assistance.

nir.tl/Sri-houses

Australia Geelong Project

The Geelong Project is an ambitious partnership between agencies across the spectrum of homelessness, youth justice, family violence, mental health, disability, education, employment, recreation, cultural diversity and aboriginal services.

Based in Geelong, a small city 80 kilometres southwest of Melbourne, it's a ground-breaking model of early intervention for young people at risk of leaving school and becoming homeless. The partnership between schools and agencies was developed over a period of five years and research shows it works.

In a nutshell, the earlier a problem is spotted the earlier the intervention and the likelihood of nipping it in the bud. In this case that means reducing homelessness and the social, emotional and health problems linked to it.

Effective early intervention means uncovering risk factors such as family conflict, mental health issues, unemployment, poverty, alcohol or drug issues and crime. But it also means strengthening protective factors such as community connections and healthy family relationships.

Early intervention can be early in the life of a child or early in the life of a problem. Either way, evidence shows that many of the harms associated with homelessness can be prevented or reduced.

One of the challenges is to determine when and how to intervene effectively. But one thing is clear: the role of families is crucial.

thegeelongproject.com.au



Algeria

Algiers la blanche cuts an impressive dash, sprawling up the hills that overlook its bustling port and its sweeping Mediterranean bay. Yet this is a capital city that has been somewhat sidelined and isolated by its recent history, while not that long ago it was an iconic source of hope.

In 1830 Algeria was not only the first Arabic-speaking country but also the first land in Africa to be subjugated by a Western empire. The Algerian independence struggle against France between 1954 and 1962 was one of the most inspiring anti-imperialist movements of the 20th century and when it was finally successful Algiers became a Mecca for revolutionaries all over the world. For a big part of what was already called the Third World, especially those countries that were still under the grip of colonial domination, Algeria was seen as a pioneer of anti-colonial initiatives and internationalist co-operation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Its activism on the international stage was matched at home by progressive social achievements such as democratizing education, giving most people access to health services and providing secure employment. By 1980, Algeria was one of the most industrialized states in Africa,

with significant management and technological expertise.

Things took a turn for the worse in the mid-1980s. With the fall in oil prices and a changing regional and international context, Algeria's autonomous development programme was deemed to be 'a failure' and replaced by a market economy. As elsewhere in the region, this entailed de-industrializing the economy, dismantling and privatizing public companies, deregulation and other forms of neoliberal restructuring.

The failure of 'secular' nationalism to deliver the promised prosperity and independence propelled Algeria's Islamist movement onto the political scene and it quickly garnered a significant following, particularly among the poorer sections of the population. The military coup that cancelled the elections of 1992, which the Islamic Salvation Front had been set to win by a landslide, effectively opened the doors of hell.

The subsequent war between the military and Islamist insurgents involved horrific atrocities on both sides and cost tens of thousands of lives. Yet Algerians in the 1990s had to cope not only with civil war but also with the forced economic liberalization and harsh austerity measures dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Algeria in the 21st century is blighted by political stagnation. Power rests in the hands of a corrupt military

and political oligarchy that denies people the right to self-determination, while effectively operating for the benefit of domestic and international capital.

This ruling elite was relatively untouched during the 'Arab Spring' of 2011. This was in part because its diffuse form of dictatorship was harder to dislodge than one that offered a precise target for popular resentment, as with Ben Ali in neighbouring Tunisia. Algeria's own ailing president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, has not been seen in public since May 2012. In addition, the regime has used the country's significant reserves of oil and gas not only to purchase relative peace domestically but also to secure international acquiescence to its continued rule – Algeria is, for example, the third-largest provider of natural gas to the European Union. Ironically, it is the recent slump in oil prices that may just open up the cracks in the stagnant political model.

The bankruptcy of party politics in Algiers has meant that the growing dissent and discontent of the past few years have been expressed instead through the emergence of social movements organizing around environmental and other issues. These are particularly strong in the Sahara, which provides most of the country's natural resources and foreign exchange but whose inhabitants have hitherto been completely marginalized. ■

Hamza Hamouchene

At a glance



Leader: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (since 1999); Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal (since 2012).

Economy: GNI per capita \$5,490 (Tunisia \$4,230, France \$42,960).

Monetary unit: Algerian dinar.

Main exports: Oil, oil products and natural gas – 95% of export earnings. Earnings from hydrocarbons have resulted in a very low level of external debt – around 2% of GDP. However, the government has been forced to draw heavily on its reserves in recent years and has imposed restrictions on imports to try to prevent these from further depletion. Youth unemployment is dangerously high.

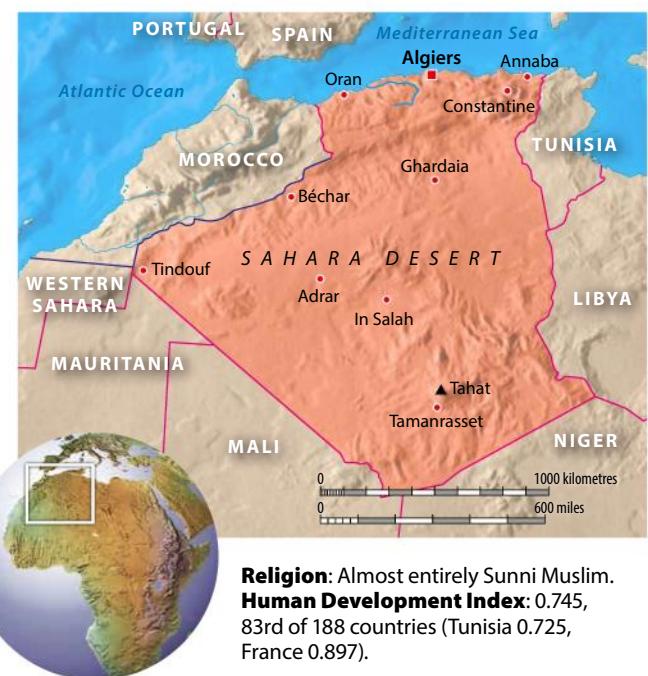
Population: 39.7 million. Annual population growth rate 1990–2015: 1.7%. People per square kilometre: 17 (France 122).

Health: Infant mortality 22 per 1,000 live births. Lifetime risk of maternal death 1 in 240 (France 1 in 6,100). HIV prevalence rate: less than 0.1%.

Environment: The Sahara Desert dominates – only 17% of the country is agriculturally useful and only 3% of it is arable land. Pollution of rivers and coastal waters by petroleum refining waste and other industrial effluents is a problem. In 2015 there were major demonstrations in southern Algeria against fracking for shale gas.

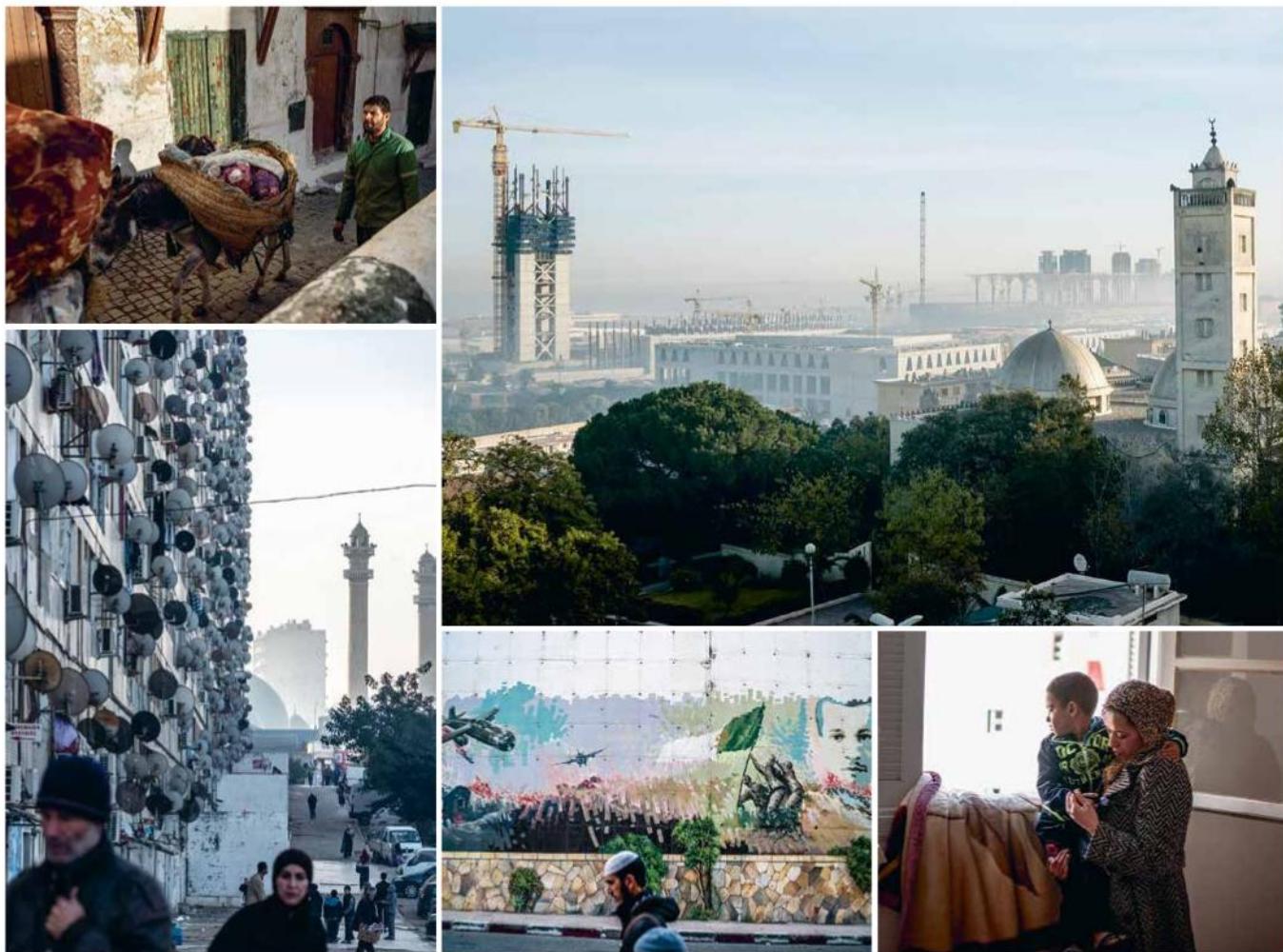
Culture: Almost all Algerians are Berber rather than Arab in origin but only around 15% actually identify as Berber and speak the Tamazight language.

Language: Arabic, French and Tamazight are all now official languages.



Religion: Almost entirely Sunni Muslim.

Human Development Index: 0.745, 83rd of 188 countries (Tunisia 0.725, France 0.897).



Clockwise from top right: **The Great Mosque of Algiers**, which will contain the world's tallest minaret, is being constructed in Mohammedia, near the capital, while an older mosque looks on; **Nabila Ounas** and her son in their new, government-supplied apartment in Cite Kourifa, 20 miles from Algiers; a man walks past a mural commemorating the war of independence against France; satellite dishes cling to the external wall of a tenement building called 'Les Dunes', said to be the longest building in Algiers; donkeys transport rubbish from the casbah in Algiers through the narrow streets.

Photos by Andrew Testa / Panos Pictures

Star ratings

Last profiled May 1999



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★

Liberalization of the economy during the past three decades has significantly increased inequality. A new parasitic class of *nouveaux riches* has emerged while unemployment and poverty are rising.

1999 ★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★

75 years (Tunisia 75, France 82). The current public healthcare system is poor and dysfunctional for many reasons, including corruption and mismanagement, but it is also being undermined to open the door for private investment.

1999 ★★★



LITERACY ★★

73%. Primary school net enrolment stands at 99%.

1999 ★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Despite some recent cosmetic reforms to improve representation of women in state institutions, women still face discrimination, having to fight retrograde laws as well as patriarchal social practices.

1999 ★★



FREEDOM ★★

The state of emergency was finally lifted in 2011 after 19 years but harassment of human rights activists, trade unionists and journalists continues and demonstrations are still banned in the capital.

1999 ★★



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★

Homosexuality is illegal and punishable by up to two years in prison. However, in practice, it is not tightly restrained by the state unless minors are involved. LGBT+ issues are generally considered taboo.

NI assessment

POLITICS ★★

The current government is not only incompetent, corrupt and repressive but also has a poor record in terms of respect for human rights. Constitutional reforms in 2016 were claimed as an advance for democracy (limiting future presidents to two terms) but would still allow Bouteflika to run for a fifth term as president in 2019. Privatization, economic liberalization and the imposition of harsh austerity measures all continue.

1999 ★★

★★★★★ EXCELLENT

★★★★ GOOD

★★★ FAIR

★★ POOR

★ APPALLING

Nigeria dares to hope

The battle against polio in Nigeria is being fought not only against the disease but against social mistrust and political violence. Yet, as LAURA JIMÉNEZ VARO reports, the end could be in sight.

Issa's right arm hangs slack along his little body. His mother takes his hand and lifts it to demonstrate; the arm falls limp. Then it's grandma's turn. She grabs the little boy's hand, lifts it up and the arm falls again. At the third go, the child looks like he has had enough and squeezes the limb to show his strength. The amused audience claps inside the dark and gloomy room.

Issa's arm is a state affair in Nigeria. Until 2016, he was the last known victim of polio in the country. His case was registered in July 2014 when he was two. One year later, the World Health Organization (WHO) certified that Nigeria had halted the transmission of the virus and removed the country from the 'black



Essential drops: a child gets the polio oral vaccine in northern Nigeria's Borno region. Health workers go from house to house in an attempt to achieve the goal of making the country polio-free.

list'. Africa was declared polio-free, and with Afghanistan and Pakistan the only remaining polio-endemic countries, the goal of global eradication by 2019 looked plausible.

But hope vanished in September 2016, when the Nigerian government confirmed two new polio cases in the northwestern state of Borno, which is besieged by the terrorist group Boko Haram. 'We are deeply saddened by the news that two Nigerian children have been paralysed by polio,' said Matshidiso Moeti, regional director of the WHO in Africa, at the time. 'The government has made significant strides to stop this paralysing disease in recent years.' Indeed, the efforts of the Nigerian authorities had brought down the 1,222 cases of wild polio virus detected in 2006 to just one – Issa – in 2014. By the end of 2016, the number of detected cases had risen again to four.

Marathon without finish

This setback shows just how hard the marathon to eradicate polio is and why the WHO has delayed the deadline for worldwide eradication year after year for the last three decades. 'Without adequate surveillance, it is naïve to think we can say even that Africa has been a year free of polio,' pointed out Annie Sparrow, a paediatrician and medical activist, back in 2015.

It's all about the maths. Poliomyelitis, a disease that attacks the nervous system, causing paralysis mainly in children under five, has no cure. It can cause death. The only thing that can stop it is a vaccine that can be delivered as an injection or oral drops. Eliminating the virus would require immunizing between 80 and 90 per cent of all under-fives, according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI, a partnership of UNICEF, WHO, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Rotary International and the US Centers for Disease Control).

But some children remain invisible. Boko Haram's violence in Borno has put 60 per cent of its people beyond the vaccinators' reach. That is 250,000 children in a region where more than half of the families reject vaccination, according to the GPEI's Independent Monitoring Board.

'Involving the local people here, involving the community leaders' has been the key to success, according to Priyanka Kana, UNICEF's communication officer in Nigeria. 'The community leader is part of the team. Polio survivors also go house to house and say: "Look, this is what polio does,"' she says, while inspecting the sheets of paper on which UNICEF's vaccination teams have recorded the details of every door knocked upon and every child to have received the magical drops. 'This was not happening earlier.'

Questions of trust

Issa's mother, Binta, doesn't care about these achievements. She worries about looking after her son. 'He doesn't play with the other children because when he used to go out to play he used to fall down. So he is with me all the time,' she says tiredly. Luckily, the boy is now able to stand on his own feet, walk and even pose in front of a camera. But he still craves his mother's attention and cries when he doesn't have it.

Binta recalls the day in July when Issa couldn't stand any more. 'I took him to the hospital and they said it might be malaria,' she remembers. 'He couldn't sit, he couldn't walk.' His stool samples, however, were positive for polio. Binta confronted her husband when she got back home: 'Amadu, look what you refused before, now see what has happened.'

The family used to be non-compliant, meaning they didn't trust the vaccine, like numerous other families in Nigeria that had been rejecting it for years. According to UNICEF data, 33 per cent of the polio cases registered in 2012 were among children whose parents would not agree to vaccinate them. The percentage is far higher than in the other endemic countries, Afghanistan (18) and Pakistan (12). Yet the rejection rate in Nigeria went down from 24 per cent in 2012 to 12 per cent in 2014.

Asmau Usman, a UNICEF mobilizer working in Nassarawa district, says that some families reject the vaccinations because they feel they first need help with issues of poverty, lack of adequate food and unemployment. They can resent the attention given to polio eradication. Similarly, with malaria killing more than 6,000 people a year, people wonder why there is such an urgency around polio.

Asmau recalls stories of doors being shut and parents saying their children were unavailable for vaccination when they were playing outside. In many cases, vaccine rejection was even incited by authorities willing to exploit the political capital of the polio eradication efforts. Political and religious entities, rebel groups or even terrorist organizations have taken this stance in order to favour their own interests among an often illiterate, marginalized and isolated population.

'Once there were politicians that made some propaganda saying that Oral Polio Vaccine would prevent kids from having children when they grew up,' says Mariam, a UNICEF mobilization consultant. She is holding little Mohamed, the young son of a herbalist and healer whom she had to trick in order to have

'Involving the local people is key. Polio survivors go house to house and say: "Look, this is what polio does"'



the child vaccinated. '[The father] doesn't believe in any medicine if it is not traditional,' she says. 'He gives medicine for a living, so he feels like it might affect his reputation.'

In the case of the Fulani, a nomadic ethnic group in the rural north of the country, their isolation leads to a mistrust of national authorities. 'Sometimes maybe they feel we are here to do something bad to them,' Mariam explains.

Government neglect also plays its part. Kano is the state where the largest number of polio cases were detected between 2010 and 2013. It is Nigeria's most populous state, but earnings are five times lower than the national average. The higher incidence of the disease here is linked to living conditions, but also to the mainly Muslim population. According to Hussam Zacharia, Emir of Kano and national co-ordinator of the Muslim Religious Leaders Forum, which partners with UNICEF and the GPEI, the vaccination campaign was viewed as an activity against Muslims' rights by the national government, the international community and anti-polio NGOs.

'We are the Muslim leaders and we refused intentionally to allow our people to be vaccinated.' This was because religious leaders didn't feel they were being 'involved': 'We are deprived of our rights, we have no importance or significance.'

Turning the tide

In recent years, Boko Haram has taken the political threat to a whole new level. The terrorist group affiliated to Islamic State has targeted GPEI's staff, copying the Taliban strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since 2012, when nine vaccinators were shot dead, workers involved in the polio campaigns have been travelling without announcing their presence.

The risks involved and the inability to access large areas in three border states – Borno, Yobe and Adamawa – led to the governments of neighbouring Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Central African Republic, along with Nigeria, declaring a public-health emergency at the end of last year to prevent the spread of polio among refugees fleeing violence.

The 2016 outbreak was not the result of a new strain of the virus, but rather one that had been circulating since 2011, but that had been overlooked.

After 2013, when the army deployed to combat Boko Haram, Borno became a black spot. The vaccination rate there was just 40 per cent and geographical coverage and tracking was poor.

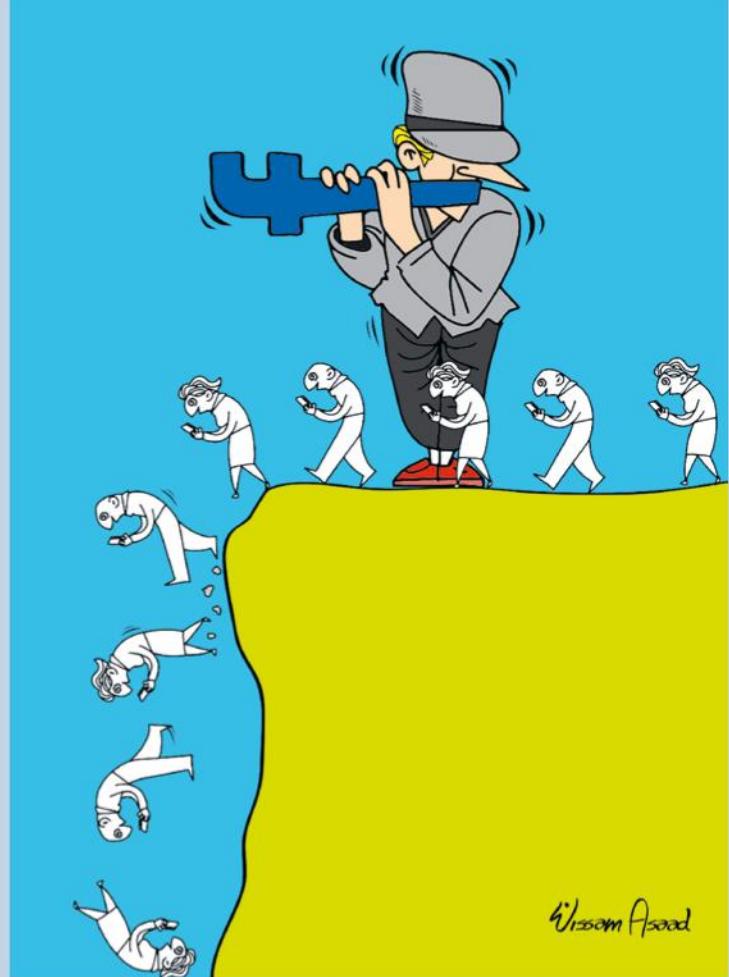
But after the declaration of the emergency in 2016, the tables were turned. More than a million children were vaccinated in five rounds of Immunization Plus Days in five months, and coverage rose to 88-89 per cent of the state.

'We are confident that with a swift response and strong collaboration with the Nigerian government, we can soon rid the country of polio once and for all. This is an important reminder that the world cannot afford to be complacent,' stated Michel Zaffran, WHO's director of polio eradication. Two years after the promise was broken that Issa's would be the last case, Nigeria is rekindling the hope of becoming a polio-free country. ■

Laura Jiménez Varo is a Spanish freelance reporter. This investigative report was conducted with the support of the 'Innovation in Development Reporting Grant' programme of the European Journalism Centre (EJC).

OPEN WINDOW

Each month we showcase the work of a different cartoonist – in collaboration with cartoonmovement.com



THIS MONTH:

Wissam Asaad
from Syria with
'Like Lemmings'

Wissam Asaad is a cartoonist based in Damascus. He has a degree in civil engineering but has been a regular cartoonist in various Syrian magazines since 2006, including *Juhaynah Syria*. He was one of the 10 winners of the 15th International Editorial Cartoon Competition in 2015.



The right way to rewrite NAFTA

What is an internationalist to make

of Donald J Trump's vow to blow up the North American Free Trade Agreement?

As of late April, President Trump was preparing to issue an executive order commencing US withdrawal from NAFTA, which he has criticized as 'one of the worst deals ever' for American workers. Analysts interpreted the move as a hardline bargaining ploy, designed to force Mexico and Canada to renegotiate the agreement on terms more favourable to the White House.

I hate to agree with Trump, but he's right about NAFTA – and about the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which he scuttled after blasting the deal as 'another disaster done and pushed by special interests'.

The problem is, the president's vision for the global economy is hardly one based on universal rights and cross-border solidarity. On the contrary, his faux-populist track record suggests that anything Trump does to renegotiate NAFTA will be geared toward providing handouts to his billionaire buddies.

Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, at the height of demonstrations against the World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund, many protesters rejected being labelled an 'anti-globalization movement' by the media. More accurate, they argued, would be to understand their mobilizations as part of a 'global justice movement' with deep international ties. Anti-corporate critics contended that the question was not whether we would have some form of globalization, but whether this order would be based on neoliberal economic mandates or on genuinely democratic principles.

The call to rewrite or repeal NAFTA has been a longstanding demand of global justice progressives. The fact that Trump has been able to co-opt this issue for his own purposes reflects a catastrophic failure of the Democratic Party.

Within the base of the party, there is a widespread recognition that neoliberal trade deals have created an international 'race to the bottom' on labour and environmental standards.



Trump and the Left may agree about TPP and NAFTA – but not for the same reason or with a shared vision for the future.

This has hurt not only US workers but their counterparts in the Global South as well. As Arthur Stamoulis, executive director of the Citizens Trade Campaign, states: 'We know that the trade debate is not about the US versus the rest of the world, but rather about multinational corporations versus the rest of us.'

Feeling pressure from the grassroots, more than 90 per cent of Democrats in the House of Representatives voted against the Central American Free Trade Agreement in 2005.

And yet, the neoliberal wing of the party still holds considerable sway. Bill Clinton, who fashioned himself

a business-friendly 'New Democrat' in the 1990s, was the leader who pushed through NAFTA in the first place. Barack Obama, who spoke out against pro-corporate trade deals as a candidate, reversed himself once in the White House and began championing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Hillary Clinton came out against the TPP on the campaign trail. But since she had previously supported it as Secretary of State, she was simply not a credible messenger.

All this created a window for Trump to capitalize on legitimate public anger about so-called 'free trade' deals.

What would a fairly renegotiated NAFTA actually look like? In mid-January, trade unionists, family farmers and environmentalists from Canada, the US and Mexico came together to articulate a vision for NAFTA replacement 'based on social justice, sovereignty, and sustainable development'. These advocates have called for adding strong and enforceable labour standards to the agreement's core text; ending NAFTA rules that increase the cost of medicines; and eliminating the ability of corporations to use secretive trade tribunals to attack environmental and public interest policies.

We can be certain that Trump will pursue none of these changes.

Using the rhetoric of rightwing nationalism, Trump has stolen the issue of trade, even while continuing to serve the interests of the wealthy. It's up to us to present an alternative vision, just and internationalist, and to steal it back. ■

Mark Engler's latest book is entitled *This Is An Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-first Century* (Nation Books). He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com.



Shifting sands

Sand-dredging is big business, especially in Asia, where demand has sky-rocketed thanks to the booming construction industry. ROD HARBINSON reports from Cambodia on an extractive industry that is mired in corruption and scandal, and meets some of those on the frontline of the fight against it.

'Sweetheart Island is the only place we can fish for crab now. Many islands have been lost to the sand-dredging already,' said fisher Lim Lon. With its houses on stilts strung out over the water, the isolated village of Koh Sralao in Cambodia's southwest Koh Kong Province is far from the tranquil backwater that it might appear at first sight. It is at the forefront of a movement to halt the sand-dredging which, since 2007, has blighted this and many other communities along Cambodia's rivers and coastline.

As our fishing boat sailed upriver through an abandoned dredging site, the mangroves





(Above) The sleepy fishing village of Koh Sralao, situated on a small island in a mangrove-lined estuary, is in the frontline of the resistance against rampant sand-dredging (left).

lay fallen and dying where the river bank had collapsed. A farmer complained that his riverside fields had receded 20 metres from erosion since the arrival of the dredgers.

'Before the dredging, the water was only two metres [deep] or less, and in some places there were sand banks, but now the water is at least five metres and some places eight,' explained another fisher, Phen Sophany. 'When the water reaches five to seven metres, there are only a few male crabs. Crabs need shallower waters for breeding.' Even when the dredgers have moved on, the crabs don't return.

Studies have demonstrated that if sand extraction is greater than the rate at which it is naturally replaced by sedimentary deposits, then erosion will take place, not just at the dredging site, but upriver and downstream too, largely because the greater river capacity increases the speed of the flow, exacerbating erosion and increasing the potential for flooding.¹

'It still impacts us when the dredgers are working upstream, because all the muddy water flows downstream – and crabs can't live in muddy water,' explained Sophany.

By 2015, dredging was hitting the community hard. Catches were down, and many families had taken out high-interest loans from loan sharks to stay in business. Others 'collected water snails in the mangroves, but now there are no snail stocks'. Some quit crab fishing altogether to seek work in the new economic zone factories in Koh Kong city, a two-hour boat ride away.

Booming demand

Despite a seeming abundance of sand, and its low cost relative to other mined commodities, rapidly escalating global demand has led to pressure on supplies, and salt-free river sand is particularly prized for use in construction work.

Asia's development boom is a key global driver of global sand demand – with Singapore by far the biggest importer. In 2012 academic Pascal Peduzzi estimated that 'the world's use of aggregates for concrete can be estimated at 25.9 billion to 29.6 billion tonnes a year – enough to build a wall 27 metres high by 27 metres wide around the equator.' He estimates that between 47 and 59 billion tonnes of aggregate and sand is mined every year.²

Satisfying Singapore's hunger for sand led neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia to experience dramatic environmental impacts at home – including, in Indonesia's case, the disappearance of entire islands. One by one, neighbouring countries stopped exporting to Singapore, leaving regional countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Burma and Cambodia to replace supplies.

And in a bid to open up a new supply front, in March a Singaporean company reportedly

held talks with the government of Bangladesh to explore a nationwide sand-dredging deal.³

Escalating activism

In April 2015, when activists from NGO Mother Nature offered to help stop the sand-dredging works, many in Koh Sralao were only too keen to form a partnership. Together, they went from one sand-dredging barge to the next, demanding that they leave. To their surprise, the sand-miners complied. It was later discovered that, with no licence to dredge in the area, companies feared being exposed.

Mother Nature then started receiving calls about large-scale dredging operations from communities further west on the Andeung Teuk River. When activists arrived, they found more than 60 sand barges owned by the Direct Access sand-mining company.

'More than 100 people protested,' says activist Sim Samnang, describing the flotilla of fisherfolk and activists who surrounded and boarded the barges. 'We warned them away from the area, from our river.' Each barge was carrying 10,000 cubic metres of sand to be transported out to sea and loaded onto giant cargo ships bound for Singapore.

The sand-dredging business is controlled by senior members of Cambodia's ruling elite, notably Senator Ly Yong Phat, according to a report, 'Shifting Sand', by British NGO Global Witness. Ly Yong Phat is well known in Koh Kong Province, where he is known as the 'King of Koh Kong' for his widespread business dealings there.

In December 2016, five community fishers, activists (including this author) and a journalist were illegally detained by security guards from the Udum Seima Peanich Industry and Mine Co while visiting its dredging site on the Tatai River. Two of Prime Minister Hun Sen's daughters, Hun Maly and Hun Mala, are listed as shareholders of the company.⁴

Activists Sim Samnang, Try Sovikea and San Mala were imprisoned as a result of their efforts at the Andeung Teuk. 'The government arrested us and left us in jail without trial for 10 months and 15 days,' Sim told me in January from a secret location outside Cambodia, where the three were awaiting the outcome of their court appeal. Sim wasn't hopeful: 'The appeal court has summoned us to trial again in Phnom Penh, but we don't trust them. Usually the Cambodian court is working under government

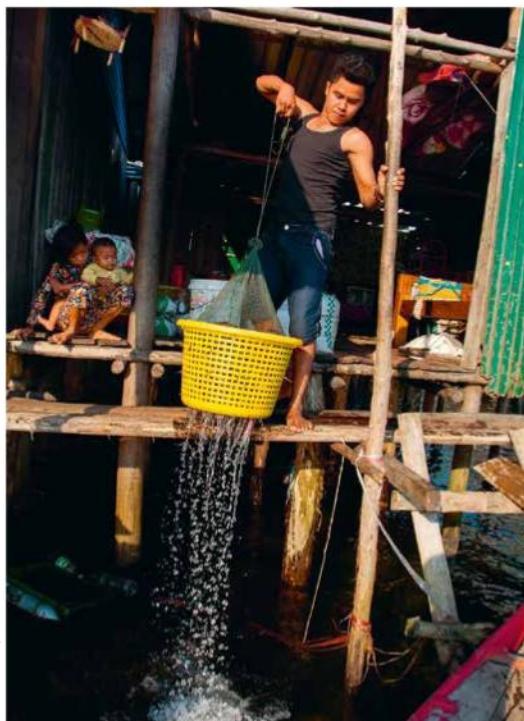
A farmer complained that his riverside fields had receded 20 metres from erosion since the arrival of the sand-dredgers

power. It's not independent, we cannot trust them. That's why we came out of the country.'

At the appeal hearing their original sentence was upheld, and although they will avoid a further prison spell for now, they remain liable to pay \$25,000 compensation to Direct Access, which brought the compensation case.⁵ Being in no position to pay the large sum, their situation remains precarious.

Sand-smuggling scam

'The people who have benefited from all this, who have pocketed all this dirty money, [are] at the highest levels of government, and [in]



Rod Harbinson / RodHarbinson.com

A Koh Sralao fisher pulls a pot of crabs out of the water to load them onto a market-bound boat. Sand-mining has knocked back fish and crab stocks.

some of the companies – which are more like mafia cartels,' says Alejandro Gonzalez-Davidson, founding director of Mother Nature Cambodia. He was deported in February 2015, for opposing construction of Cambodia's proposed Areng dam.

He explains how in October 2016 he uncovered a scandal involving millions of tons of illegally exported sand to Singapore. By investigating sand import and export trade figures available on the UN Commodity Trade Statistics Database, Mother Nature identified a large discrepancy in quantities of sand exported by Cambodia to Singapore. The discrepancy was valued at around \$750 million.⁶ So where had the missing sand gone?

'Hundreds of millions of dollars have been stolen from the Cambodian people,' says Gonzalez-Davidson.

The Ministry of Mines and Energy have repeatedly dismissed the discrepancy, with spokesperson Dith Tina saying there was no 'concrete proof' and that re-import and export of the sand through third-party countries might be responsible. The response of the Cambodian government to the scandal was temporarily to halt sand exports to look into the matter.

In December 2016, the Cambodian Parliament's anti-corruption commission called on mines and energy minister SE Suy Sem to explain the discrepancy, but in a letter to the Singapore Ambassador on 7 March 2017, the Commission said that it 'did not find the explanation satisfying'.

The letter went on to request that the Singapore government share full details and documentation of all its sand imports: 'Failure to effectively allay these suspicions and to collaborate with us might tarnish the reputation of Singapore, a country regarded as being one of Asia's most transparent and least corrupt.'

At the beginning of April, opposition parliamentarian and Commission member Son Chhay said that he had met with officials from the Singapore embassy, who had declined to provide the information requested. The *Cambodia Daily* reported Chhay as saying: 'I think that the Singapore side is trying to hide something. They are not honest with us.'⁷

The controversy remains unresolved. Meanwhile, in April Mother Nature's activists discovered that construction of a sand-washing facility was under way deep inside a national protected area. They suspect dredging operations will restart at any time. 'It's quite evident that sand is too valuable, too much money has been made by a lot of people, dirty money, and they're just trying to make sure that this resumes eventually,' explains Gonzalez-Davidson.

The fish return

'Fish have returned and dolphins have been spotted too,' enthuses Mot Sopha. At Koh Sralao, things are looking up since the halt on sand-dredging. 'We have money to repay our debts from buying fishing nets and boat equipment,' her husband Sophany adds.

The community remains concerned, however, because some of the dredging boats have not left the area. Sophany remains undeterred. 'Now we have changed our behaviour. We feel stronger than before. We will go and complain if they start dredging again,' he concludes. ■

Rod Harbinson is an investigative journalist, photographer and filmmaker engaged in environmental and human rights issues, particularly in Southeast Asia. RodHarbinson.com.

The people who have benefited from all this, who have pocketed all this dirty money, are at the highest levels of government

1 IOSR Journal of Pharmacy, Vol. 2, Issue 4 (July 2012), pp. 1-6 **2** Environmental Development, 2014, vol. 11, p. 208-218 **3** BDNews24, nin.tl/sand-proposal

4 According to Commerce Ministry records.

5 Cambodia Daily, nin.tl/activists-freed **6** Phoebe Seers 'Singapore's overdue response to Cambodian Sand trade data misses the point', 17 January 2017 mlex.com **7** Cambodia Daily, nin.tl/experts-rebuff



Capitalism – the theme park

Most theme parks are built on fantasy. Disney's Magic

Kingdom, for example, is a saccharine dreamscape presided over by a giant mouse. But the theme park I took my daughter to last week has nothing to do with fantasy. On the contrary it was a harsh lesson in the brutal realities of capitalism.

KidZania is an amusement park with 19 branches worldwide, each comprising of a small, indoor city where kids perform real life jobs in return for hard cash – or KidZos, a currency which, post-Brexit, is more stable than Sterling.

It claims to be an ‘educational entertainment experience’ with the motto ‘Get ready for a better world’. But after my four hours in the bleak consumerist Lilliput, I left certain that far from being a ‘better world’ KidZania was just as stressful, confusing and awful as the real one.

The whole thing starts with a perfect reconstruction of a chaotic airport check-in desk on the first day of the school holidays. Everyone is then tagged like petty criminals before the kids are sent off into the big wide world of work. I had to question my daughter’s life choices after she turned her nose up at a career as a pilot, rejected the chance to train as a surgeon and opted instead to put a shift in as a hotel chambermaid, for which she earned the princely sum of eight KidZos. A true proletarian.

The place is like something Adam Smith and Walt Disney might come up with if they had stayed up all night together drinking and doing good quality acid. They really

don’t sugar the pill of life at the mercy of the market very much at all. My daughter’s career path hit a glass ceiling when she chose not to go to the University of KidZania, a move that could have increased her earning potential by up to 25 per cent.

KidZania is an unashamed shrine to the sterile, dystopian human-made landscapes that have become the high streets of so many of our cities. All the big brands are well represented and the main difference is that the kids approach the low-paid, low-skilled work with an enthusiasm very much lacking in the dead-eyed, zero-hours, wage-slaves working there for real. Child labour is alive and well and being sold back to us as entertainment at £25 (\$32) a head.

Far from being educational, KidZania is a cynical, corporate propaganda exercise masquerading as a family day out. A sepia toned, cookie cutter version of capitalism that’s fun and, most dishonestly of all, actually works. A temple to Mammon with full employment, no debt, no homelessness, no food banks, and where it only takes 20 minutes to train as a heart surgeon.

It was without doubt one of the most bizarre, crass and consumerist ghettos I have ever visited (and I’ve been to Dubai). When it was time to go we were forced to exit via ‘immigration’ ensuring we ended the day enjoying a fully immersive deportation experience. By the end, if there had been a textiles sweatshop for the kids to work in or Victorian chimneystacks to sweep, it wouldn’t have surprised me in the least. After all, that’s Capitalism kids! ■



Mixed Media

Machines (75 minutes)

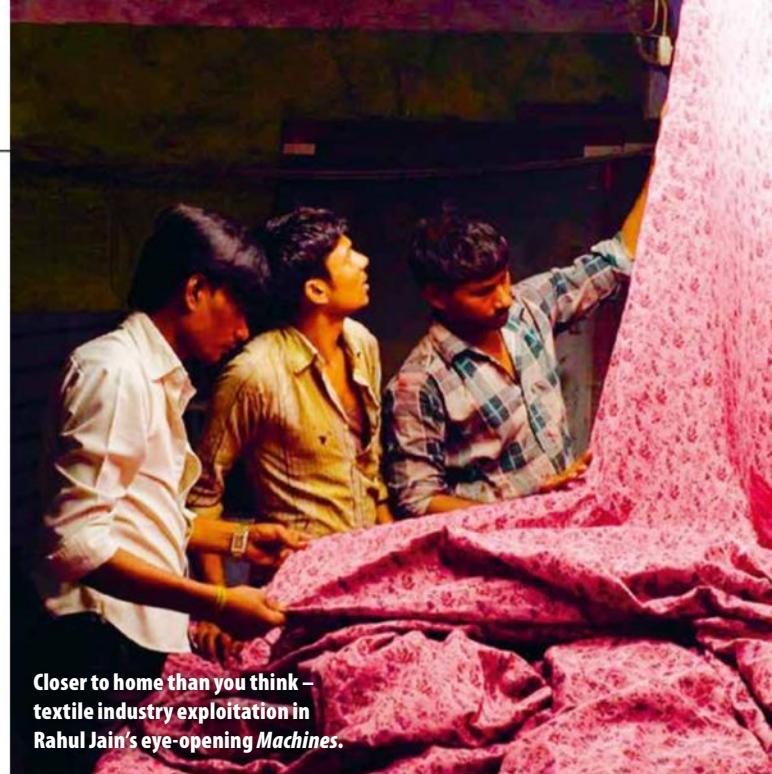
directed and written by **Rahul Jain**

In the mainstream media, we only occasionally hear about pay and conditions in textile factories in faraway places. When we do, it is because campaigners have disrupted shopping, or when there is a catastrophe that cannot be ignored.

Over the past 50 years Gujarat has massively industrialized and, as a boy, debut director Jain often visited his grandfather's textile factory there. The factory in this film is a different one, but family connections gave Jain privileged access. You have to wonder about his relatives' responses to the eye-opening scenes he has recorded.

The huge, dank, badly lit, sweltering (and apparently stinking) factory, built only 12 years ago, is an astonishing mix of high- and low-tech. We watch a boy perched under big electrically-driven rollers, endlessly repeating the same arm movements to prevent cloth tangling. A man plants his bare feet on a large spinning drum to dampen extreme vibration. A boy struggles not to fall asleep – and not fall into the machinery, or down to the floor.

The pay per 12-hour shift is the equivalent of three dollars. The workers themselves support unions, but say their leaders are targeted and murdered. A smart-arse, English-speaking company director, remarks that if his



Closer to home than you think – textile industry exploitation in Rahul Jain's eye-opening *Machines*.

workers earned more, they would only spend it on alcohol.

This is an unforgettable fly-on-the-wall doc that simply follows, shows and listens, and focuses vividly and eloquently on faces. It's about exploitation that is not a million miles away, but in our high streets and warehouses.

★★★★★ ML

FILM

The Other Side of Hope (98 minutes)

directed and written by **Aki Kaurismäki**

There won't be many comedies about the distress and hardship Syrian refugees face. This, like Kaurismäki's previous film (*Le Havre*), has a local middle-aged man shelter a young person who arrives, unlawfully, by boat. More downbeat, droll and sunless, **The Other Side of Hope** features Wikström, a Finn who manages a run-down

Helsinki restaurant. Wikström hides and finds work for Khaled, whose family, apart from his sister, have died in the bombing of Aleppo.

It's an odd film – all Kaurismäki's films are. Austere, and about humdrum and everyday solidarity, the focus is on people whose hearts are in the right place. Wikström's chef and waiter, who have as much enthusiasm for their work as potatoes, try to hide from him the startled-looking dog who lives in the kitchen. This is a decidedly un-bourgeois

world of scruffy dress, workers' uniforms, odd haircuts, gloomy 1960s interiors, and, popping up everywhere, buskers, blues and rock'n'roll bands.

The world is run by the wrong people. There are immigration board officials who decide that Khaled is not at risk in Syria and to send him back on the first plane, the next morning. Or the leather jacketed 'Finnish Liberation Front', who are prevented from setting Khaled alight by a group of rough sleepers.

Offbeat and downbeat, sober and uplifting, enter the Kaurismäki universe. Absurd, clearly, but with the respect and compassion to suggest another is possible.

★★★★★ ML



Syrian refugee gets Finnish welcome in Kaurismäki's offbeat, downbeat and oddly uplifting film.

Rûwâhîne

by Ifriqiyya Electrique (*Glitterbeat, GB 046 CD, LP, digital*)

While trance-inducing music is nothing new, the ways it is used and disseminated have changed radically since recording technology has been available. Every culture has always had its own version of a highly rhythmical music capable of inducing altered states of consciousness – but what happens when the music is moved from its original ritualistic focus? Is it a way of preserving a culture or transmuting it?

Ifriqiyya Electrique's **Rûwâhîne** is an interesting case in point. From southern Tunisia's Djerid, a desert area abutting the Sahara, the greater part of Ifriqiyya Electrique are musicians who take part in the Banga rituals of the Sufi saint, Sidi Marzûq. With drum and chant, raspy metallic percussion and (here's the modern bit), a bit of computer technology and electric guitars, the Electrique ensemble make an impressive noise and it's worth tuning into YouTube to watch and hear 'Arrah Arrah Abbaina', the powerful piece of music that closes this album.



Ifriqiyya Electrique –
Sufi trance traditions
meet industrial fuzz.

The addition of a heavy, computer-aided beat moves us closer to a club experience. This transition is not always easy. French guitarist François Cambuzat's industrial fuzz that opens the Muslim prayer, 'Laa La Illa Allah', is extraneous and feels like a sound world has intruded too far. But **Rûwâhîne** is a mix of things: an album and movie in the making as much as it is a knowing 're-composition' (their word) that transports the Banga to new worlds.

★★★ LG

trasportimarittimi.net/ifriqiyya_electrique.html

MUSIC

The Underside of Power

by Algiers (*Matador OLE 1171, Vinyl, CD, Limited Vinyl, Digital*)

There is a lot going on in Algiers' second album, musically and politically, and it's all expressed with an articulate fury against a US political system that cracks, strains and groans against its contradictions.

If that sounds too much to take on board, let's just say that the mighty-voiced Franklin James Fisher and Algiers do it with as much gospel-inspired, synth-stabbing drama as is possible. Not many people could turn a phrase such as 'crypto-fascist contagion' into a call to the dance-floor. Post-punk, Southern swamp rock and the electro-scuzz of the artier bands in the electronica spectrum, have never been so sanctified.

Algiers has chosen a big sound palate, used in a historically based, musical argument that makes the case for its political and social urgency. Songs, alongside sound samples, make direct reference to the 'hate that keeps passing on' – the legacy of a systemic racism that now, in the US, overtly occupies high office. Several references to Albert Camus's *The Plague* are used to indicate how deep this infection runs.

The Underside marshals its arguments well and Algiers is as likely to quote Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault,

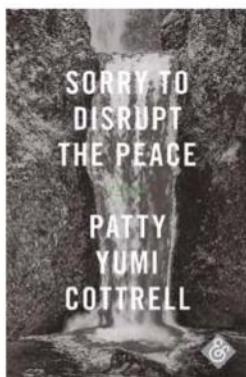


Algiers – delivering
articulate fury against
systemic racism and
other contemporary evils.

both philosophers of power, as it is the Staples Singers. The album channels the sounds and the rhythms of contemporary civil rights: 'Cry of the Martyrs' and the album's title track pull Motown beats into a frenzied, operatic scenario that is hooped by doomy synthesized landscapes. Redolent of both Public Enemy and Nina Simone, this is a latter-day 'Mississippi Goddam'.

★★★★★ LG

algierstheband.com



Sorry to Disrupt the Peace

by **Patty Yumi Cottrell** (*And Other Stories, ISBN 978 1 911508 007*)

Learning of the death of her adopted brother, Helen decides to find out why he killed himself: ‘Behind every suicide, there’s a door,’ she explains. She returns to her adoptive parents’ home and starts investigating, but rather than discovering more about her brother – at least, until the surprising denouement – she exposes painful truths about her own ethics and mental health.

Order and logic are the building blocks of Helen’s world – her solace and a means of controlling her underlying anger – and she uses them to try to make sense of what appears to her a senseless act by her brother. A neutral and passive observer, Helen struggles with social interaction

and the physical proximity of others. Whether or not she has autism or Asperger’s is never revealed, but hers is a singular narrative voice that offers challenging opinions and questionable versions of events. In one scene, she puts the funeral flowers in buckets of water – yet the ‘water’ is diluted bleach and they all die. An act of ill-judged kindness or of sabotage?

We eventually learn the reason for the suicide of Helen’s adopted brother, who, unlike his sister, believed that some doors should remain closed. Whether Helen finds closure from her investigation is open to debate. By reading Patty Yumi Cottrell’s excellent debut novel, as unsettling as it is compelling, you may well find your peace disrupted, too – but read it you should.

★★★ JL
andothertestories.org

BOOKS

Roots, Radicals and Rockers

by **Billy Bragg** (*Faber & Faber, ISBN 9580571327768, hardback and ebook*)

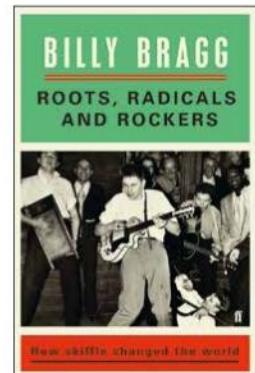
As a musician, Billy Bragg has done much fine work as a sonic archaeologist; now he adds the book to his meticulous methodology. Skiffle was a popular music genre that started in 1920s US – a hybrid of US blues and folk, with a bit of jazz thrown in. Cue its relocation to post-War Britain, and skiffle was an energiser that changed the world – at least, that’s Bragg’s thesis. How does it hold up?

Actually, remarkably well, as Bragg presents it as a music that linked old worlds to help define a fast-changing post-War reality. He has written not only a musical history but a cultural one too, in which New Orleans jazz purists meet nascent rock’n rollers, where grassroots social movements – from reactionary teddy boys to the stirrings of student radicals – rub together. It takes in the post-1945 phenomenon of the ‘teenager’;

and the violent beginnings of a multicultural Britain.

This is a riveting book, written by a fan who sees the links and mutations between musics. The litany of musicians who pass through includes: Lead Belly, Lonnie Donegan, the soon-to-be Beatles, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones. Bragg has a great turn of phrase: not many books can open with a definition of ‘dead ground’, a term he first came across as a young trainee tank driver, during his short-lived army career, to describe what is hidden in plain view. Bragg’s acute vision helps him paint a vivid history.

★★★ LG
faber.co.uk



Breaking Sudan

by **Jok Madut Jok** (*Oneworld, ISBN 978 1786070036*)

Until 2011 Sudan was geographically Africa’s largest country. But after decades of bloody civil war, a new nation-state emerged – South Sudan. The news was greeted with jubilation by locals and the international community. But, six years later, the situation in South Sudan is abysmal. A civil war has been raging for the past three years between government and opposition forces, and genocide has been replaced by mass famine.

In **Breaking Sudan**, Jok Madut Jok attempts to explain why the end of the prolonged north-south conflicts and the break-up of the country, in the name of peace, has paradoxically created more conflict. A public policy expert

and academic, he uses research conducted over a number of years in South Sudan and among the diaspora. He listens closely to how violence and militarization have affected individuals’ lives.

Jok concludes his tragic narrative on an ambivalent note. This conflict is complex and unpredictable and violence within South Sudan isn’t the only issue to deal with. Political tensions remain between North and South Sudan and there is a growing threat of another war between the two countries. Jok argues that North and South Sudan could develop lasting cordial relationships if they could stop politicizing the needs of their people. But he admits that, at present, it is almost impossible to predict a positive outcome for the world’s newest country.

★★★ JPO
oneworld-publications.com

The Island that Disappeared

by Tom Feiling (Explore Books, ISBN 978 19111 84058)

Most people are familiar, at least in outline, with the story of the founding of the United States; how a plucky band of Pilgrims fled religious persecution in England and, with the help of the indigenous people, battled climate and disease to establish their settlement in Massachusetts. In this fascinating book Tom Feiling uncovers a parallel narrative which has almost been lost to history; one which, had things panned out differently, could have led to the colony being established not in New England but in Central America.

In 1630 a sister colony to that in Plymouth was established on the small island of Providence, 70 miles off the coast of Nicaragua. The Providence Island Company, set up by puritan parliamentarians, had high hopes that their venture would be the first of a series of flourishing – and profitable – colonies in the Caribbean and Central America. However, within a decade, the settlement was destroyed, victim of crop failures and

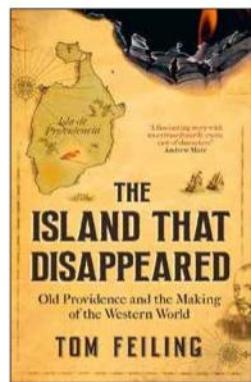
Spanish invasion and those who remained on the island resorted to a slave economy and piracy, a way of life far from the religious idealism of its founders.

Tom Feiling packs his intriguing tale with period detail and colourful anecdotes and, bringing the story up to date, he ends by travelling to present-day Providence, now

a department of Colombia, where he finds a community of devout churchgoers who are, in an ironic echo of their forebears, economically dependent on the cocaine smuggling trade. Four centuries on, the legacy of puritans and pirates, it would seem, is still reverberating down the corridors of history.

★★★ PW

exploretravelwriting.com



Also out there...

MUSIC **Namlo** is a UK-based band of Nepali heritage and its self-financed, eponymous album, approaches the tricky issue of how one national music translates and mutates in a new context.



Led by Ganga Thapa, Namlo offers a refreshing and smart approach, with Nepali-language songs backed by an able band.

Anything new from Malian guitarist **Vieux Farka Touré** is always welcome and his new album *Samba* (Six Degrees) is no different. Touré is outspoken in his condemnation for jihadists who are harming Mali, and vocal in his ecological concerns, too.

The re-release of **Mulatu Astatke's** *Mulatu of Ethiopia* (Strut) is a fantastic opportunity to discover how Ethio-jazz was founded and how its ideas spread.

Late to the table: **Rhiannon Giddens's** *Freedom Highway* (Nonesuch) is jaw-droppingly, breathtakingly superb. Recorded in Louisiana in wooden rooms that predate the American Civil War, the Carolina Chocolate Drop founder channels full-on civil rights here: a rightful ire pervades 'At the Purchaser's Option'.

FILM In Claire Ferguson and Llion Roberts' impressive, original and compelling **Destination Unknown**, a dozen now elderly Jews recount their differing experiences of World War Two. It avoids cliché and stock images of brutality, focusing on people, who relive overwhelming cruelty and loss, but emanate ongoing love and commitment to others.

The Shepherd is a building, brooding tragedy of speculative development wreaking havoc in a Salamanca village, Spain. Carried

by the central portrayal of an amenable middle-aged man, happy with his slow life – simple house and meals, dog, sheep, landscape – and trips into town for library books, stays in your head.

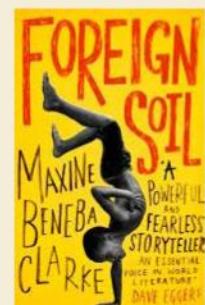
In Matt Tyrnauer's inspiring, informative doc **Citizen Jane: Battle for the City** Jane Jacobs mobilizes neighbours against developers' 'slum clearance' of Greenwich Village. Later she leads Soho



Citizen Jane – taking on the construction czars of New York.

and Little Italy's stand against construction czar Robert Moses' highways and concrete and high rise. A worthy tribute.

Who's Gonna Love Me Now? focuses on a very sociable and likeable Londoner with HIV at odds with his conservative religious Israeli family ever since his expulsion from their kibbutz. The brilliant London Gay Men's Chorus has, he says, become his extended family, but parents and siblings both pull him in and hold him off. Honest, intimate, sympathetic.



BOOKS **Foreign Soil** (Corsair) can be a place – Brixton, Kampala, Melbourne or Jamaica – where you feel ostracized or abandoned. But alienation can also be felt within a family, or even within a body. Maxine Beneba Clarke's sharp and shocking short stories look at longing and belonging and challenge you to reconsider what identity means.

STAR RATING

★★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ FAIR ★ POOR

Rodrigue Mugaruka Katembo

He puts his life on the line to protect the Democratic Republic of Congo's national parks.
VERONIQUE MISTIAEN talks to the dedicated conservationist.

'When [the mining company] came and showed us

the documents saying that they had authorization to drill for oil in the park, we were shocked,' recalls Rodrigue Mugaruka Katembo, who was head ranger at Virunga National Park on the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the time. 'It was painful because it would surely be a catastrophe for the gorillas: they would disappear.'

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Virunga is the oldest national park in Africa, 768,000 hectares containing extraordinary biodiversity and beauty. It is home to a quarter of the world's critically endangered mountain gorillas, as well as other endangered species, including chimpanzees, elephants and lions.

'Since I was a boy, I wanted to be a public servant: I don't like illegality and corruption. And I wanted to conserve Congo's natural heritage,' says Katembo. However, things could have turned out very differently: in his early teens, he was lured into the Congolese army with the promise of studies in Europe and served four years as a child soldier. But once he left, he returned to school, determined to make up for lost time. He studied ecology and natural resources management, and became a park ranger at Virunga in 2003. He quickly earned a reputation for integrity and exceptional leadership in this challenging environment.

Despite its importance, Virunga has been ground zero for the DRC's military conflicts. The park is also under constant threat from illegal mining, armed rebels and wildlife poaching, making patrolling Virunga one of the most dangerous jobs in conservation. More than 160 of Katembo's park ranger colleagues have been killed in the line of duty over the past 15 years.

At Virunga, Katembo quickly rose up the ranks and became warden of the park's central sector – an area of interest to oil companies.

When vehicles from the British oil company Soco International drove into Virunga one morning in 2011, Katembo was alarmed. Soco staff flashed permits, which the Congolese government had sold them illegally, and offered him money to let them pass. But he refused and reported the incident to the park director, Emmanuel de Méröde. They agreed that it



was vital to document carefully evidence of corruption.

Over the next four years, Katembo went undercover, pretending to accept bribes from Soco and recording these encounters. His investigation exposed corruption at the highest levels and forced Soco to abandon oil exploration in the park. The footage Katembo gathered featured in the documentary film *Virunga* (Netflix 2014). 'Corruption stories like this happen all too often, but capturing people incriminating themselves on camera is incredibly rare,' says Nathaniel Dyer, Global Witness Congo team leader. 'Rodrigue showed great courage and nerve to provide incontrovertible evidence which was central to getting Soco out of Virunga.' But Katembo paid an enormous price for his activism: he was taken at gunpoint by Congolese soldiers and detained illegally for 17 days during which time he was tortured and subjected to mock executions.

Following death threats and the failed assassination of de Méröde in 2014, Katembo was transferred to Upemba National Park in southern DRC, for his safety. As the new director, Katembo has been trying to reintroduce elephants and zebras, which had disappeared as a result of mining and poaching on a massive scale. Since starting work at Upemba, Katembo has fought off armed militia, faced death threats and refused to accept bribes from mining companies. He now lives apart from his wife and children for their safety.

'I am not special,' he says. 'Yes, I was imprisoned and tortured, but many guards have died doing their job. If I have to die today, I am prepared for it. By protecting the park, I am protecting the livelihoods of local populations, Congo's natural heritage and the world's heritage because our dense forests help to fight climate change. This is my vocation.'

In recognition of his bravery exposing illegal oil exploration in Virunga National Park, Katembo was awarded the 2017 Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa – a type of Nobel for environmental activists. ■

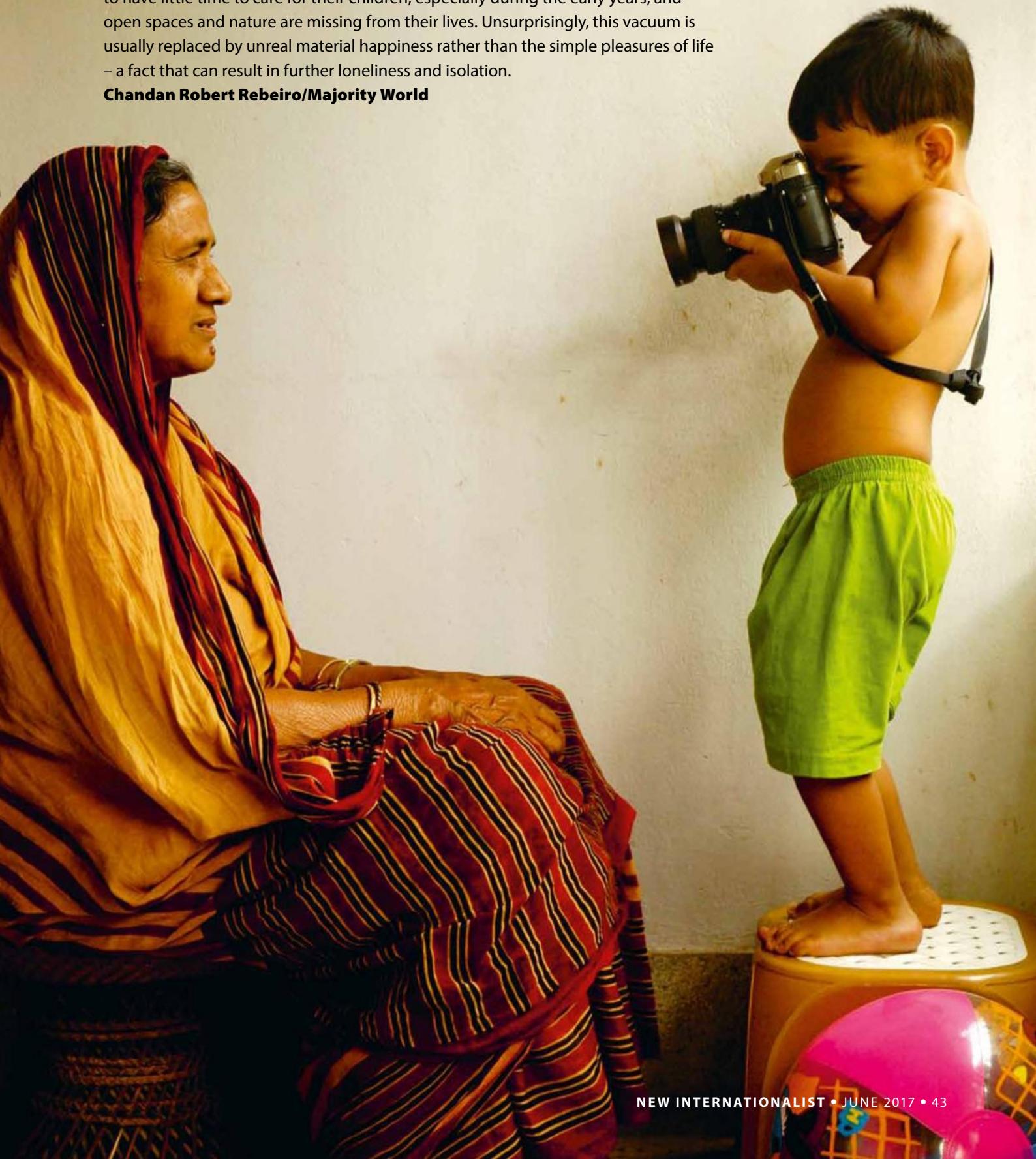
Veronique Mistiaen is an award-winning journalist, writing about global development, human rights and the environment. @VeroMistiaen therighthuman.blogspot.co.uk/

Southern Exposure

Highlighting the work of artists and
photographers from the Majority World

I took this photo in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2007. Like most urban children living in our fast-growing metropolises, he was growing up in a tiny, confined space – but the camera offered him an opportunity to create his own fantasy world, despite all the constraints. From an early age, children are exposed to artificiality. Busy parents seem to have little time to care for their children, especially during the early years, and open spaces and nature are missing from their lives. Unsurprisingly, this vacuum is usually replaced by unreal material happiness rather than the simple pleasures of life – a fact that can result in further loneliness and isolation.

Chandan Robert Rebeiro/Majority World





The Kim Family

The dictator and his public:
Kim Jong-un does the rounds.



Job: Dynastic rulers and 'supreme leaders' of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea to everyone else)

Reputation: Raving paranoid autocrats

Plain crazy or crazy like a fox? The answer is that the Kims are probably both. Grandfather Kim Il-sung, who earned his spurs in the then-united Korea's fight against Japanese invaders in the 1930s, was a man of ruthless political skill. After the Second World War, he eliminated all potential dissident voices in the Korean communist movement, especially those associated with South Korea, Russia and China. He bathed himself and his family in the ideology of *Juche*, a Korean variant of authoritarian Marxism-Leninism that privileges national self-reliance in politics, economics and self-defence above socialist values such as popular democracy or international solidarity. This fetish for a stand-alone-against-the-world self-reliance remains a key element of the Kim dynasty's ideological arsenal.

The stakes are high for the Kims. Internal politics in the Hermit Kingdom resemble a combination of classic Stalinism (including regular purges of the overly ambitious or high profile) with the dynastic politics of a feudal European court, with various pretenders and their supporters vying to ascend to the throne. In February, the half-brother of current leader Kim Jong-un was murdered at an airport in Malaysia. Kim Jong-nam's assassination shows how vicious these paranoid manoeuvrings can be. That it is all

carried out using an arcane version of Marxist discourse should give pause for thought about the need to reinvent a popular language of the Left.

But if you are a Kim inclined to maintain family rule at all costs, you will discover that there is no shortage of plotters for regime change. The US, for example, was determined to drive back communism after the Second World War, not only from Europe but also from the Korean peninsula. Kim Il-sung fought a bloody civil war to keep the North communist, and was not without nationalist support. The remnants and echoes of this war still reverberate and shape the intransigent nature of the Kim dynasty.

With each generation, the bloodline thins and the Kims' political skills seem to deteriorate. There is a fair distance between the grandfather who fought off the Japanese and the US and Kim Jong-un (now in his early thirties) who attended private Swiss boarding schools and is reportedly obsessed with computer games and US basketball. But inheriting a position at the pinnacle of an absolutist and brutal state is bound to provide some psychological continuity. In a study of the psychology of dictators (including Kim Jong-un's father Kim Jong-il), *Scientific American* identified several anti-social personality traits including sadism, paranoia and narcissism. Kim Jong-un's elimination of his uncle Jang Song-thaek for 'treachery' in December 2013 shows that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

With North Korea's social structure ossifying into a wealthy elite and a desperately poor majority, the Kims

have sound reasons for their security concerns, quite apart from the propensity of the US to engage in a policy of regime change to remove 'undesirable' governments from the global chess board. North Korea is now a nuclear power and the country's nuclear obsession is the final guarantee of its militant self-reliance and the Kim dynasty's security. It is unlikely that the Kims – supported by a bloated military and pervasive security police – will succumb to regime change any time soon. As unpalatable as it may be, the international community needs to find a way to make them feel more, not less, secure. The consequences of failure could be dire. ■

ICNA/Xinhua/Alamy Live News



LOW CUNNING: Kim Jong-un, like his father and grandfather, has cultivated an image of aggressive irrationalism to keep his immediate neighbours and the international community on edge. He tends towards a cycle of aggressive behaviour (often involving nuclear missile tests) followed by conciliatory gestures, which are often rewarded with food and other aid packages.

SENSE OF HUMOUR:

Under the current regime, North Korea has officially banned sarcasm because Kim Jong-un worries that people will agree with him but only ironically.



Sources: Al-Jazeera; Wikipedia; OpenDemocracy; London Review of Books; *Scientific American*; BBC News; *The Independent*; *Toronto Star*.

Puzzle Page by Axe

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of \$30/£20. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 23 June to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; fax to +44 1865 403346; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org
Winner for 220: Ben Hanley, Birmingham, England.

Crossword 222

CRYPTIC Across

- Area of California east of Fresno, pastureland, gets to mean something to economy ultimately (6,6)
- Currency in Reykjavik is most uncommon, needing gold to be westward-looking (5)
- German city composer – one frequently heard before another? (9)
- Scots town, with relations fractious, is defaced (7)
- Flood in Germany starts to ruin hock in northeast (5)
- OK, I buy a bar that's condemned, after a real battle, by the Nile (7,3)
- Formal accessory worn by one of good breeding? (4)
- Transhume alpine stock to a coastal location in northern Sweden (4)
- Quietly move bit by bit to cage New York money-grubber (10)
- Faith, member of cast, is reported (5)
- Bee bent on making landing in Uganda (7)
- Ban sole Algonquian-speaker (9)
- One's into hair – what a state (5)
- Arab brat's coy about region west of 14a (7,5)

CRYPTIC Down

- Vessel carries little weight in US mountains (5)
- Managed to track a rook to a Scottish isle (5)
- Look grave, twitchy, taking drugs out of a Ukrainian city (8)
- Quality of captain is the main link between Marlborough and Wellington (4,6)
- Biblical city to note in Edessa today (4)
- Magical 21 literature? 'Childish' fits, pretentiously more than once, in the Roman style! (6)
- Hard to make a poet envisage a city in Ontario (8)
- 8/24 Occasion to put on jumpers for much of the time, such was county cricket of yore? (5-3,5)
- Chronicles here are fictitious – bet 'Archers' are too! (10)
- Here in the Gulf is an embryo environment that's getting rid of junk (3,5)
- In speech, see a Scotsman – one in the South Sea islands... (8)
- ...with a cat, in an heroic adventure – that's quintessential (8)
- Fighting Asian, one from Pakistan, maybe detailed

to give support to covering in retreat (6)

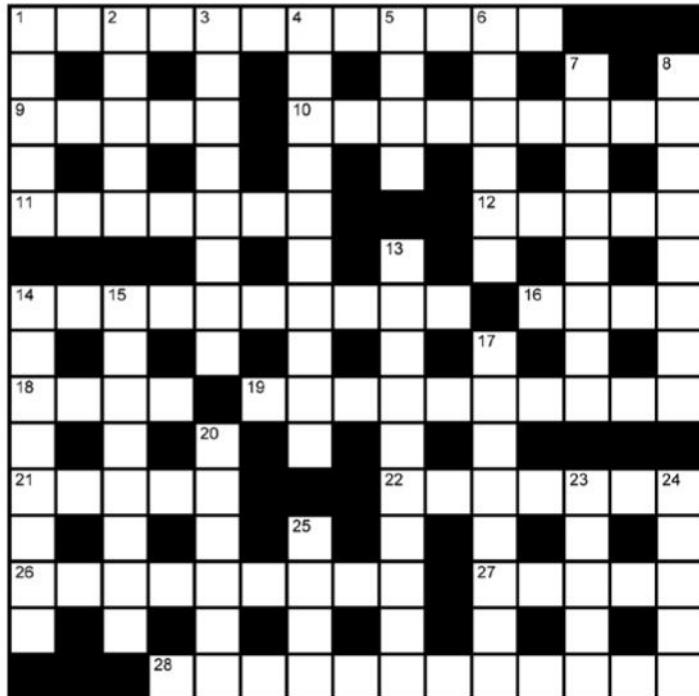
- Part of Portugal where southern republicans exist (5)
- See 8
- Missouri seaman finds a place in the Bible (4)

QUICK Across

- Part of California known for its hi-tech industries and Disneyland (6,6)
- One-hundredth of an Icelandic krona (5)
- German industrial city and composer of operettas (9)
- Ex-county town, Scots (7)
- European river, from Swiss Alps to North Sea (5)
- Other name for the Battle of the Nile (1798) (7,3)
- Horse-breeding or poker (4)
- Home to Sweden's northermost university (4)
- Miser (10)
- Member of major religious group (5)
- Inland-port and Uganda's ex-capital on L Victoria (7)
- Member of Algonquian confederacy (9)
- US state: capital, Augusta (5)
- N African shoreline famous for its Moorish pirates (7,5)

QUICK Down

- Arkansas mountains which



form a forested plateau (5)	cross country (5-3,5)	example (of something) (8)
2 Island in the Firth of Clyde, 'Scotland in miniature' (5)	13 Trollope's chronicles? (10)	20 British soldier from Nepal (6)
3 Industrial city of the Ukrainian Donets Basin (8)	14 Capital of the United Arab Emirates (3,5)	23 Historic Portuguese province, includes Aveiro (5)
4 Channel between Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean (4,6)	15 Polynesian, eg: one of a loose continental group (8)	24 See 8
5 Turkish city near Syrian border, Edessa pre-1637 (4)	17 Describing a perfect	25 OT kingdom east of the Dead Sea, home of Ruth (4)
6 21 or Buddhist religious literature re ritual acts (6)		
7 Places of the same name in Scotland, Canada & NZ (8)		
8/24 Equestrian competition that involves show jumping, dressage and		

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Angkor, 9 Helmand, 11 Grenada, 12 Aden, 13 Scots, 14 Moor, 17 Titograd, 18 Gabon, 21 Benue, 22 Grantham, 25 Ro-ro, 27 Basra, 28 Amid, 31 Enfield, 32 Trojans, 33 Elsinore, 34 Nelson.
Down: 1 Athwart, 2 Galveston, 3 Oran, 5 Bogota, 6 Rhea, 7 Abaco, 8 Dhahran, 10 Dachau, 15 Ogden, 16 Agana, 19 Bohemians, 20 Ararat, 21/4 Bernese Oberland, 23 Madison, 24 Gander, 26 Rufus, 29 Leon, 30 Lome.

Sudokey 68

The Sudoku that thinks it's a word game!

2	6		9			
				8	4	
4	5	7	8	6		2
9	8	4	2	1		
5	2	9				
	3	5	6			
5				9		
	2	8	4	1		
3	1	4	5	2		6

Now, using the key below, substitute letters for the numbers in the south-east block...

1=H; 2=U; 3=Y; 4=G; 5=N; 6=B; 7=L; 8=R; 9=C

...and make as many words as you can of three letters or more from the nine letters in the keyword, the extra clue to which is: 'Daniel's still in Tennessee, here to kill food for a return?'. You cannot use the same letter more than once, nor use proper nouns (excepting the keyword), slang, offensive words, abbreviations, particles or simple plurals (adding an 's' or 'es').

GOOD 45 words of at least three letters, including 30 of four or more.

VERY GOOD 50 words of at least three letters, including 35 of four or more.

EXCELLENT 55 words of at least three letters, including 40 words of four or more.

Last month's Sudokey keyword: 'Southerly'.

Solution to Wordsearch 67 The 39 world cities with four letters were: Baku, Bari, Bath, Cork, Gifu, Giza, Graz, Homs, Hull, Ipoh, Kano, Kiev, Lima, Lviv, Lyon, Metz, Omsk, Oran, Pune, Riga, Rome, Sfax, Suez, Suva, Tula, Tyre, Umea, Urfa, Uruk, Vigo, Waco, Wuhu, Wuxi, Xian, Ya'an, Yazd, York, Yuma, Zibo.

Wordsearch 68

Find the 20 Irish counties hidden here.

C	D	O	N	E	G	A	L	W	A	Y
N	A	M	M	I	R	T	N	A	Z	R
T	Y	R	O	N	E	S	L	I	G	O
L	Y	W	L	N	H	T	U	O	L	S
I	N	L	K	O	A	K	R	O	C	C
M	N	H	A	E	W	G	N	Q	V	O
E	E	T	R	F	R	G	H	M	U	M
R	K	A	X	D	F	R	X	A	R	M
I	L	E	T	O	O	Y	Y	N	O	
C	I	M	R	D	U	W	S	O	I	N
K	K	D	A	V	F	I	N	G	A	L



Mohsin Hamid

The author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* talks to GRAEME GREEN about extremism, the refugee crisis and feeling at home in the past.

In your new novel, *Exit West*, you write: 'Geography is destiny'...

In geopolitical terms, geography can be a matter of life and death. When relations between people start to break down, when suspicion and xenophobia grow, and when schisms start manifesting themselves, the exact location where you are from can take on deadly forms.

Very often, we experience political events in a particular way because of who we are. People aren't necessarily bound by where they come from, but it has a very real impact.

I take a position that it's not as simple as being 'from Britain' or being 'from Pakistan'. I don't think that because someone is British or Pakistani or Muslim or male or gay or whatever that decides everything. But we have to acknowledge that there are some forces at work.



Exit West looks at the refugee crisis. Why did you want to tackle this issue?

It's a central issue of our time. It has always been a central issue of all time. The movement of people, of migrants and refugees, has always been part of the human condition. What is perhaps different is the relatively recent notion about the boundaries of nation-states. In some ways, the borders of Pakistan or Britain or Germany or America are unnatural. The current crisis isn't about people being refugees and migrants. The crisis is that we think of such movements of people as a crisis.

I think inevitably humanity is going to come to a place where the notion that people can move and choose where they live will be thought of as a right that is as fundamental as the right to speak as we want or worship as we want.

How do you think future generations will judge this moment in world history?

With a certain degree of horror at the way we have treated our fellow human beings. It will seem as abhorrent to us as having slaves looks to us now.

Opposition to migration is a fundamentally immoral position. We have built societies on the notion of democracy and individual rights and liberty. We are seeing our liberal democratic systems shudder under the weight of this hypocrisy: if we are unprepared to extend liberal democratic values beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, we are hypocrites. We can't say that everyone is born equal and then treat as sub-human the people who come to our shores in desperate circumstances.

What good can the arts do?

Books can create an empathy for people who are different from ourselves. They broaden our sense of compassion.

One thing that art and literature can do is imagine futures for us. At the moment, we are seeing

a failure of imagination. No-one is articulating plausible desirable futures for us as human beings. What we are hearing articulated is dystopias – that life will be terrible in the future – or vehemently nostalgic, divisive, chauvinistic visions from the likes of Donald Trump or the leaders of ISIS.

Ten years on, why do you think *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* had such an impact?

There was a lot of space in that book for readers to bring their own stereotypes and fears into play. I think it touched on something in our daily lives. We are often navigating the sense that we're feeling afraid of someone without being sure if there's a reason why. People responded to that.

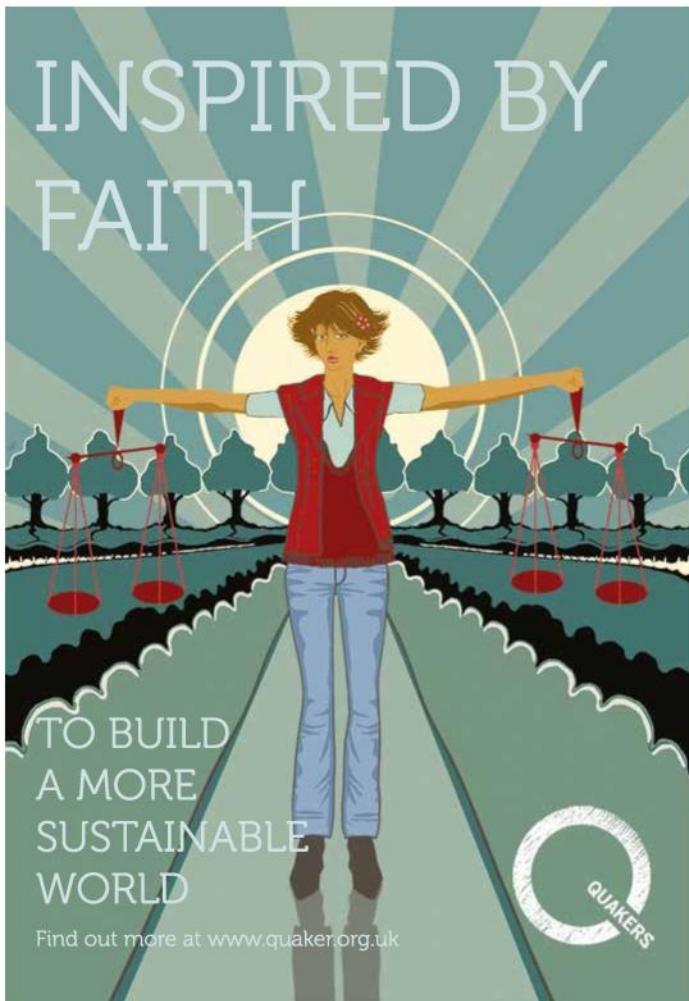
Where do you feel most at home?

I don't know if I feel particularly at home anywhere these days. It's a strange situation. I was in San Francisco recently and spent time in the Bay Area where my father is a university professor. There was a sense of home there. I was meeting old friends and feeling nostalgic about spending time in California, but then I came to London, where I got married and my first daughter was born: the important things in my life. Lahore is where I live now. I move between London, America and Lahore. All three are my homes but none of them are entirely my home.

We often think about *where* we feel at home, but I have started thinking differently: *when* do you feel at home? As I get older, I feel less and less at home in the present moment. More and more, the past is where I feel most at home, which is, of course, gone. I'm always a little bit not-at-home in the present. ■

Exit West by Mohsin Hamid is out now, published by Hamish Hamilton. mohsinhamid.com

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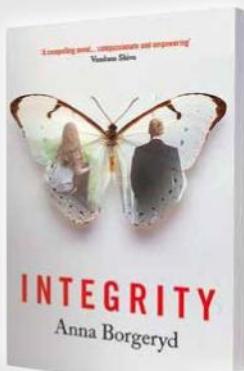
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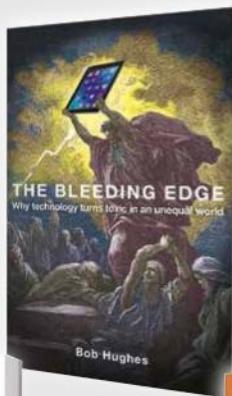
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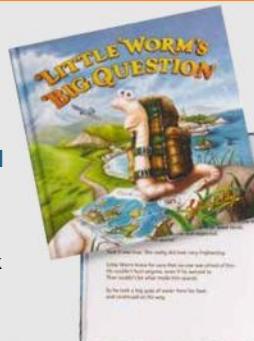
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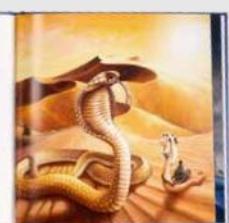
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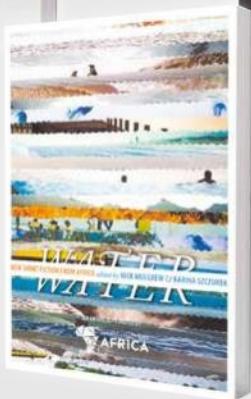
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